ABC

Gardening AUSTRALIA

TV show
7.30pm
Friday

January 2023

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DESIGNING with ornamental grasses

how to grow
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THE DIGGERS CLUB

welcome

Most gardeners grow at least a couple of plants that hold deep sentimental value. It might be a flower grown in memory of someone special. Or a plant loved for its nostalgic scent or colour. Or maybe it's a vegetable that forms a key ingredient in a dish that transports you back to your childhood or homeland.

Imagine growing plants that connect you with a vast history of sustenance stretching back for generations. That's the case for First Nations food producers Clarence Bruinsma and Adam Byrne who grow 35 different bush foods on the outskirts of Sydney. They are part of a continuum of food producers who have been caring for Country and cultivating these foods for millennia. Read about their vitamin-packed produce, and their passion for sharing Cultural knowledge in AB Bishop's lovely story (*page 40*), the first in a series on First Nations food producers that we're looking forward to bringing you this year.

Conversations about the weather used to belong to the realm of routine water-cooler talk. But these days, it's no longer a topic of idle chatter. Erratic weather, extreme events and record-breaking floods are the talking points right around the country. While some of us batten down the hatches against hail, gale-force winds and wintry temperatures, others are sweltering in heatwave conditions.

These fluctuations are hard enough for human communities to grapple with, let alone our plants and wildlife. It's timely, then, that native plant expert Angus Stewart and his daughter, Emma Stewart, have co-authored a new book all about futureproofing the garden. The way forward, say Angus and Emma, is to create resilience and adaptability in the garden. Turn to page 46 for a sneak peek at their book, and their recommendations on adaptable plants to nurture in your garden. (Also check out our story on melaleucas, the sweet, bird-attracting trees and shrubs that are a great addition to the extreme-tolerant garden, page 24.)

While many of us are currently baffled by sodden soils, the fact is that most Australian gardeners are usually grappling with extended periods of dry. The story of Sarah and Roger Budarick's garden, on South Australia's Fleurieu Peninsula, is a salutary tale about dry climate gardening. In the face of blasting heat and wind, Sarah's sanguine approach is to bend with the conditions rather than manipulate them, focusing on drought-tolerant plants that naturally feel at home. See Jenny Baldwin's story on page 34.

If you're taking a well-deserved summer break, there's plenty in our pages to keep you planning and planting! It's a great time to plant some climbers for shade, screening or to beautify a pergola: check out our top 10 suggestions (*page 16*). And if you have ever thought about including ornamental grasses in your garden layout, Michael McCoy puts forward a convincing case for these ethereal beauties on page 28. We have summer survival tips in our Planner (*page 73*), and for something completely different, have you considered growing lychees? (See page 62 for inspiration.)

Until next month, happy gardening.

Liz

Elizabeth Wilson

STAY IN TOUCH

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For all your top jobs in the garden this month, turn to page 73

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CLEVER CLIMBERS • EXPLORE THE WORLD OF BUSH FOODS
• FUTUREPROOF YOUR GARDEN WITH RESILIENT PLANTS

Ornamental grasses add texture and movement to the garden. Pick up design tips on page 28. **Photo: GAP Photos/ Elke Borkowski**

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ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and traditional custodians of the lands where we live and work.

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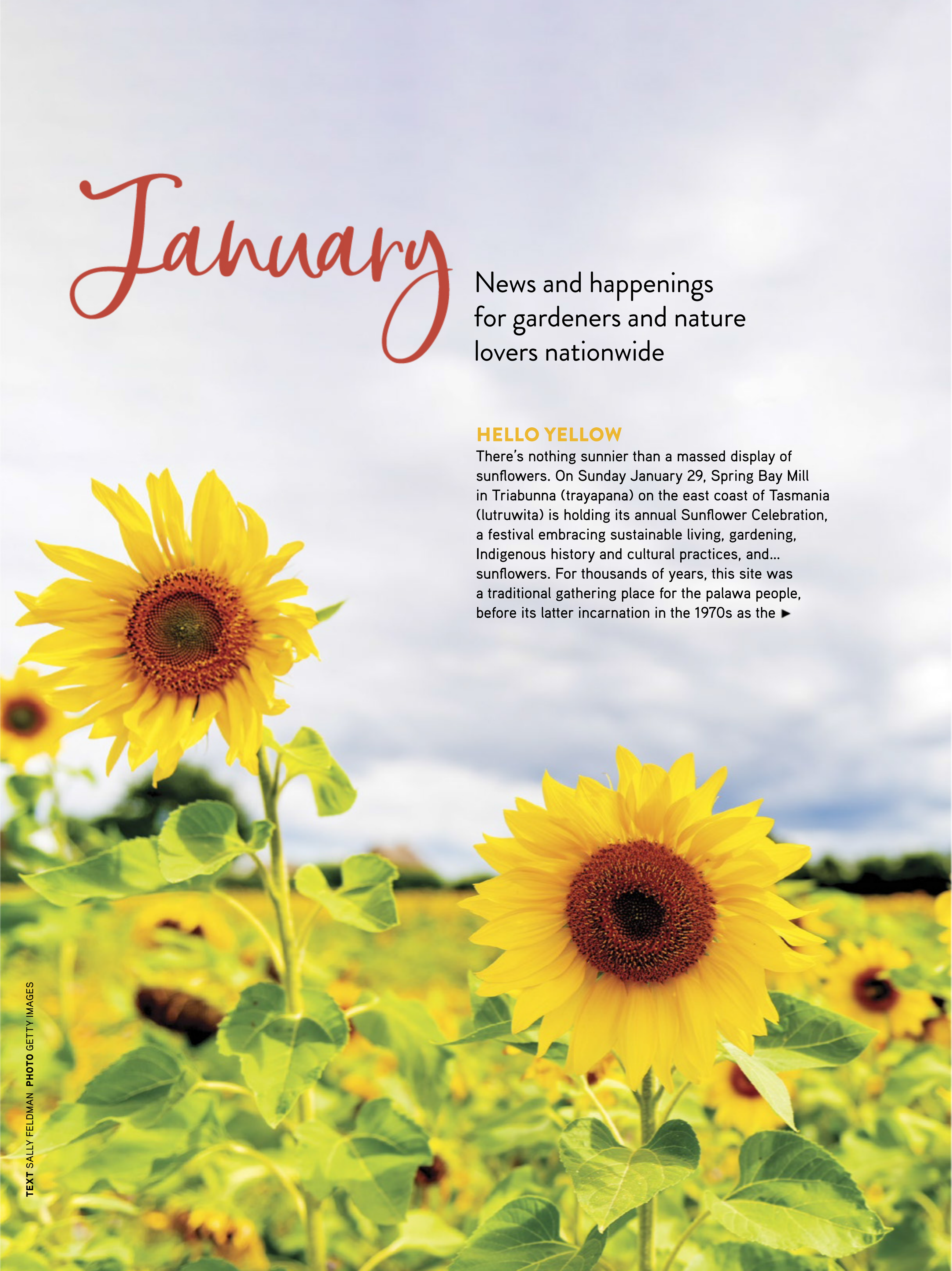


January

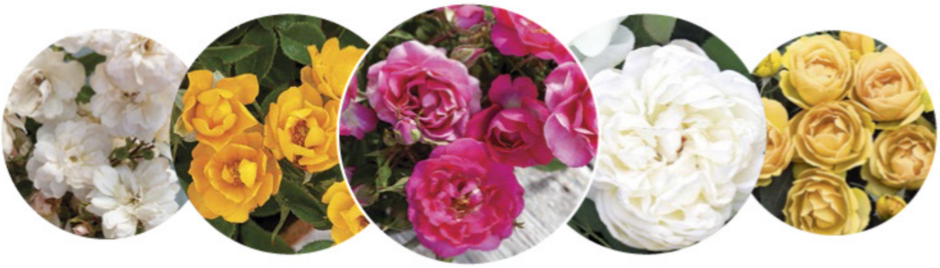
News and happenings for gardeners and nature lovers nationwide

HELLO YELLOW

There's nothing sunnier than a massed display of sunflowers. On Sunday January 29, Spring Bay Mill in Triabunna (trayapana) on the east coast of Tasmania (lutruwita) is holding its annual Sunflower Celebration, a festival embracing sustainable living, gardening, Indigenous history and cultural practices, and... sunflowers. For thousands of years, this site was a traditional gathering place for the palawa people, before its latter incarnation in the 1970s as the ►

TEXT SALLY FELDMAN **PHOTO** GETTY IMAGES

world's largest wood-chipping mill. Over the past decade or so, this industrial site has been reinvigorated as an events venue, designed, built and run on sustainable, regenerative principles, and is once again a place for people to gather, learn and be inspired. It also won gold in the Positive Impact Tourism category of last year's Tasmanian Tourism Awards. For more information and bookings, visit **springbaymill.com**



A good year for the roses

January sees the arrival of five eminent Italians to our shores, via a collaboration between two venerable rose nurseries: Wagner's in Kalangadoo, South Australia, and Rose Barni in Pistoia, Tuscany. Rose Barni has been breeding roses since 1882 (a tad longer than its Australian cohort, which has still clocked up an impressive 70 years) and has already made its name on the local scene, with multiple awards at the National Rose Trial Garden of Australia. So say "*Ciao*" to (*above, from left*) the petite white 'Cometa', sunny yellow 'Lucciola', bright pink 'Delizia', snow-white 'Mariangela' and golden 'Paolo', and expect more Italian superstars in the coming months. **wagnersrosenursery.com.au**

ESSENTIAL WEEDING

Adelaide locals foraging for inspiration to keep the kids entertained can sign up for Jacqui Garcia's Forage School workshop to learn the basics of safely identifying and preparing edible weeds on Sunday January 22. Under her banner of Edible Adelaide, Jacqui's mission is to expand people's understanding of the abundance of edible and medicinal plants growing in and beyond their own backyard. "Throughout the year, there are loads of wild edibles in Adelaide that add more diversity to our diets, including wild fennel and three-cornered garlic," says Jacqui. **Instagram @edible.adelaide**

Can you bee-lieve it?

Entomologists and conservationists are abuzz with the news of the recent discovery of a new native bee species, *Leioproctus zephyr*, in a Perth suburb. Dr Kit Prendergast (*right*), ecologist and self-described 'Dr of the Wild Bees', had been doing bee biodiversity surveys as part of her PhD research comparing urban bushland remnants and residential gardens. "Bushland remnants are so important," she explains, "and this bee is only found in bushland remnants in the Perth metropolitan area."

The bees were foraging exclusively on waldjumi (*Jacksonia sericea*), a native pea flower endemic to south-west Western Australia. When Dr Prendergast studied them under a microscope, she discovered their distinctive large, protruding clypeus (a shield-shaped 'plate' on an insect's head), which enables the bees to collect pollen from within the complex structure of the flower. "This new species is so exciting that, hopefully, my next step is to get it legislated for conservation protection."

As for the bee's name, Dr Prendergast's beloved Maremma sheepdog companion,

Zephyr, scored the taxonomic kudos. "I got her as a puppy not too long after I started my PhD," she says. "She's now five and a half years old, and has been with me through some trying times. She has so much character."

HOME-GROWN HEROINE

To be in the running for an American Garden Rose Selections award, roses go through exacting two-year trials to find specimens that embody everything our hearts desire in one of the world's most beloved garden plants: beauty, fragrance, disease resistance and low maintenance – no matter the conditions. Among the five 2023 winners, an Australian shrub rose, the gorgeously scented Brindabella 'Pink Princess', bred by John Gray in Toowoomba, Queensland, took out three Regional Choice awards and a Fragrance award – a fitting tribute to the calibre of our local industry. **brindabella-gardens.com.au**

PHOTOS ISTOCK, ALISTAIR BETT, WAGNER'S ROSE NURSERY, JACQUI GARCIA, DR KIT PRENDERGAST, BRINDABELLA COUNTRY GARDENS

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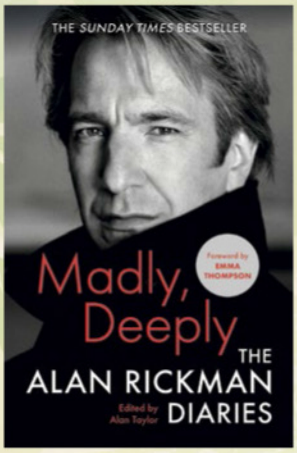
THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER
Foreword by EMMA THOMPSON
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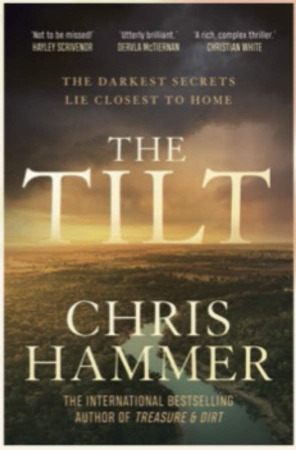
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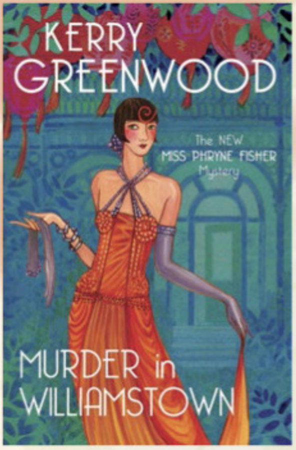
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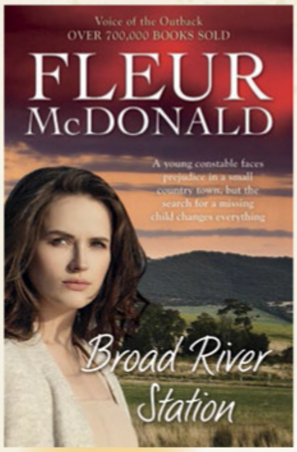
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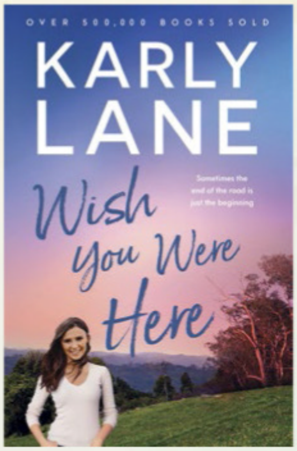
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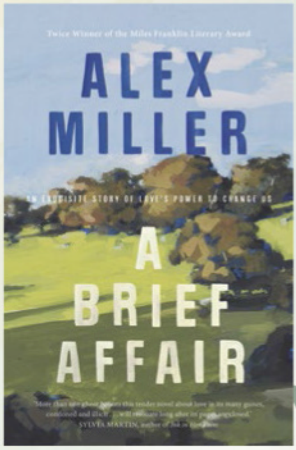
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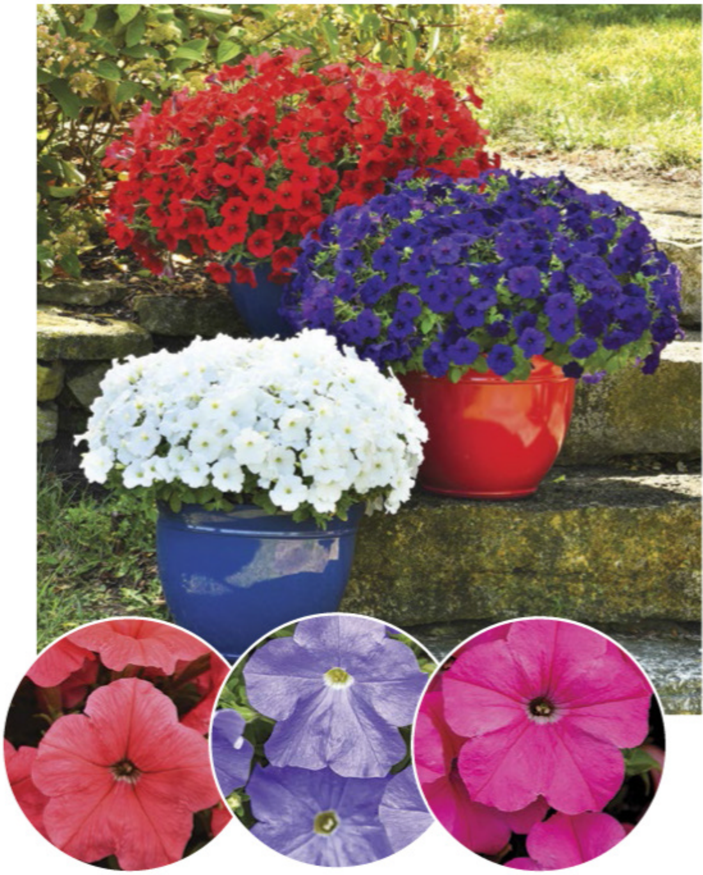
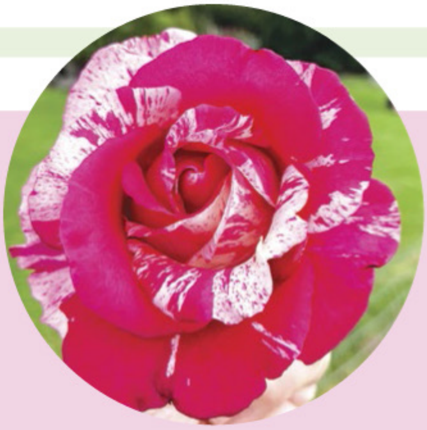
ON THE SHELF

PLANTS

A selection of new releases to add to your garden

You can count on petunias to put on a cheery, colourful show, and the new and improved **Petunia Crazy** range packs an impressive visual punch. They've been bred to have a high tolerance to both the heat and cooler conditions (a boon in these erratic climatic times) and come in six vibrant colours. They are fast growing – up to 30cm high – and will bloom prolifically right through spring and summer, especially if you're diligent with deadheading. They're ideal for hanging baskets or pots, where they'll cascade prettily, or plant them out in garden beds where they can spread up to 80cm. Choose from (*above right*) **'Crazy Red'**, **'Crazy Blue'** and **'Crazy White'**, and (*right*) **'Crazy Coral'**, **'Crazy Sky Blue'** and **'Crazy Pink'**. **floriana.com.au/perfect-pots**



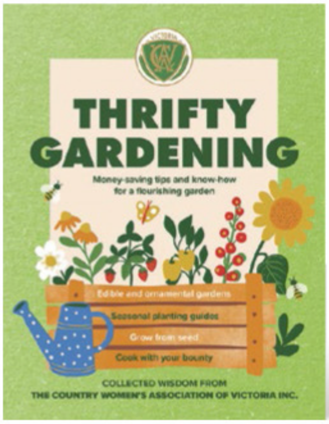


Bred in Queensland, the new Hybrid Tea rose **Brindabella 'Delicious'** has a deep and truly 'rosy' scent. The power of its perfume is matched by its large, deep pink double flowers streaked with white and café-au-lait, held on long stems that beg to be cut for a vase. Growing to 1.3m tall and 1m wide, this vigorous bushy variety boasts dark green foliage against which the blooms make a fabulous display – and expect plenty of them, as this rose will repeat-flower in flushes every seven weeks or so. That striking colour holds fast in the heat, too. **brindabella-gardens.com.au**

The latest addition to the Aloha range, ***Mandevilla* Aloha 'Bright White'** certainly lives up to its name. The abundant, trumpet-like blooms of this shrub-like variety are a vivid snowy-white, tapering to golden-yellow in the centre, contrasting beautifully with the plant's glossy, deep green foliage. Australian-bred, like the others in the Aloha range, this mandevilla is well suited to local conditions, being quick-growing, hardy and happiest in the heat. Expect consistent flowering throughout the warmer months, extending to all-year flowering in tropical conditions. You can train it up a trellis, drape it over a pergola, trail it from a hanging basket, or simply let it do its own compact thing as a potted specimen for the balcony or courtyard. It's available at selected nurseries. **ramm.com.au**

TEXT SALLY FELDMAN

ON THE SHELF BOOKS


THRIFTY GARDENING
Money-saving tips and know-how for a flourishing garden
Edible and ornamental gardens
Seasonal planting guides
Grow from seed
Cook with your bounty
COLLECTED WISDOM FROM THE COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC.

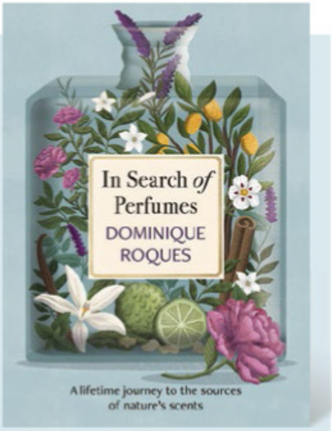
THRIFTY GARDENING

The Country Women's Association of Victoria Inc.
Murdoch Books

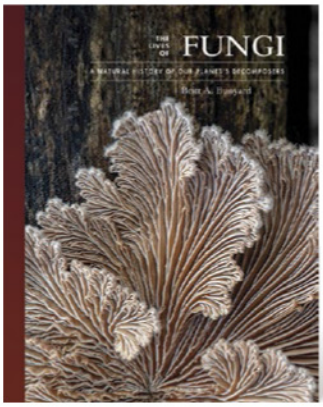
This handy little reference book is packed with ideas to help you save money and get the most from your edible or ornamental garden. The collective wisdom of this venerable organisation's garden mavens has been put to good use, offering sound advice on everything from growing from seed and dealing with pests, to seasonal garden tasks, such as pruning, mulching, weeding and feeding, as well as great ideas for garden projects and kid-friendly activities. Plus, as you'd expect from the CWA, there's plenty of tried-and-true recipe inspiration for how to use your produce.

IN SEARCH OF PERFUMES

Dominique Roques
Welbeck Publishing


In Search of Perfumes
DOMINIQUE ROQUES
A lifetime journey to the sources of nature's scents

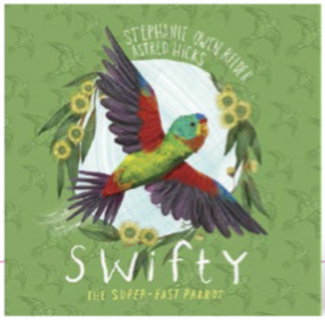
Dominique Roques has spent the past 30 years in the fragrance industry. In this memoir, he describes his global odyssey in search of the best natural ingredients for his perfumes. He has collected flowers, fruits, bark, leaves and spices from across the world – from Andalusia to Somaliland via Bulgaria, Laos, El Salvador, Indonesia and Egypt. His journey also took him to Kununurra in Western Australia, where India's sacred sandalwood tree is now grown. Translated from the French original by Stephanie Smee, Roques' book reveals how the perfumes produced in this multi-million-dollar industry often begin life as a single plant harvested by producers using ancient techniques.


THE LIVES OF FUNGI
A NATURAL HISTORY OF OUR PLANET'S DECOMPOSERS
Britt A. Bunyard

THE LIVES OF FUNGI

Britt A Bunyard
Princeton University Press

Sub-titled *A Natural History of Our Planet's Decomposers*, this detailed, yet accessible book is a fascinating exploration of the mysterious and often hidden world of fungi. An engaging introductory overview is followed by sections covering chemistry, physiology and reproduction. We meet saprobes and parasites, pathogens and mutualistic symbionts, while pandemics and scourges, and the relationship between fungi and humans – even fungi and the future – are covered. There's no end to the wonders of these organisms – from their diverse colours and shapes, to their effect on our environment – and this book's photography illustrates this beautifully.


STEPHANIE OWEN REEDER
ASTRED HICKS
Swifty
THE SUPER-FAST PARROT

SWIFTY: THE SUPER-FAST PARROT

Stephanie Owen Reeder
Illustrated by Astred Hicks
CSIRO Publishing

This is the tale of Swifty the swift parrot – one of the fastest parrots in the world. It follows the story of her development, from hatchling to fledgling, as she learns to fly and joins other parrots migrating from Tasmania to Australia's mainland following the blossom trail. There are lots of facts, too, as well as information about how children can spot swift parrots in their backyards and help protect this critically endangered species.

SWOOP
Nicole Godwin
Susannah Crispe

SWOOP

Nicole Godwin
Illustrated by Susannah Crispe
CSIRO Publishing

A charming illustrated children's book about a magpie protecting the eggs in his nest as he swoops at the humans he sees as threats. Temporarily injured, he recovers in time to protect his little magpie fledglings. *Swoop* explores why magpies do it, and includes lots of fun facts about this Aussie bird.

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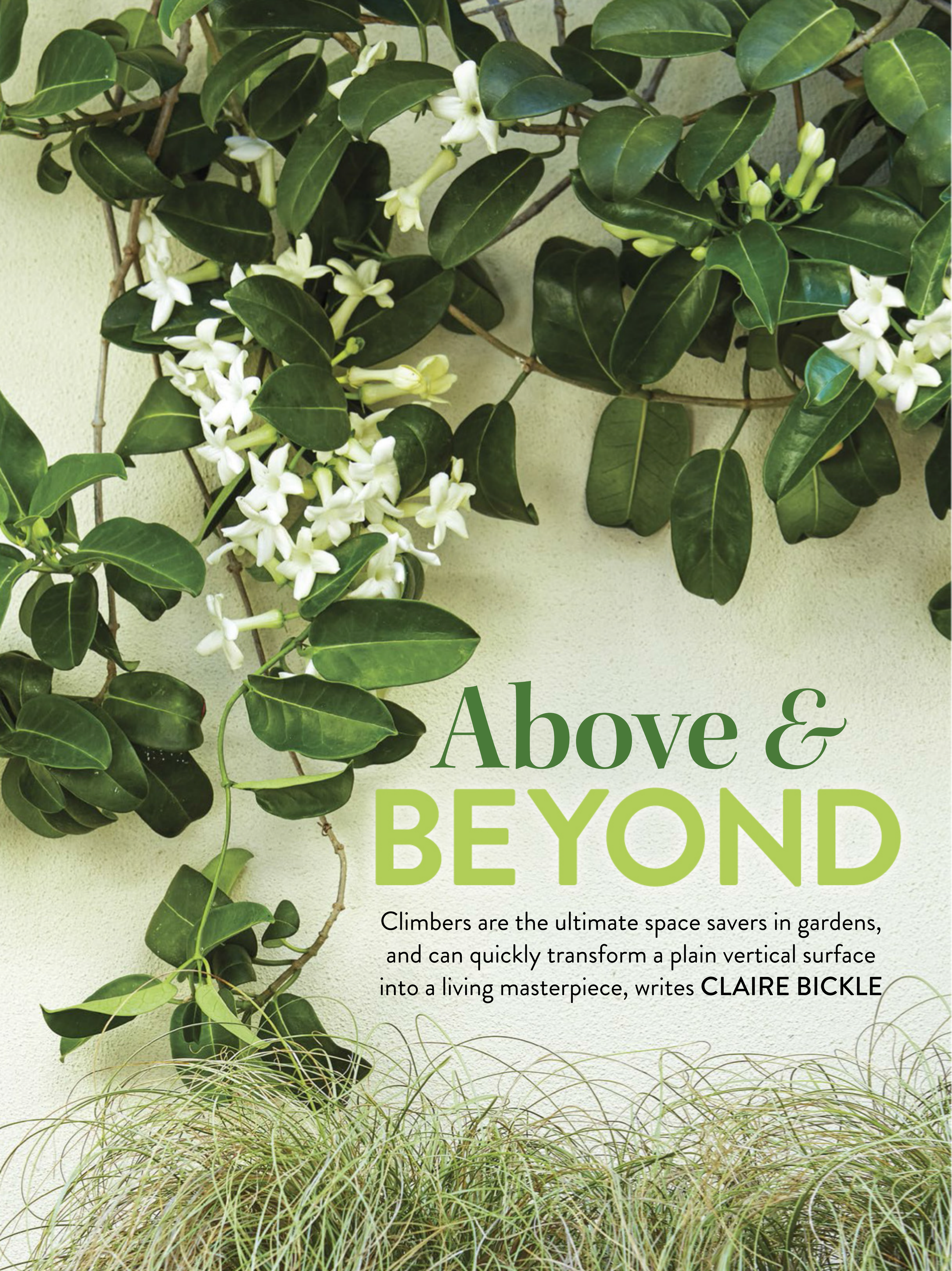


Above & BEYOND

Climbers are the ultimate space savers in gardens, and can quickly transform a plain vertical surface into a living masterpiece, writes **CLAIRE BICKLE**

PHOTOS ROBERT FRITH/ACORN PHOTO, SHUTTERSTOCK

Climbing plants are such a versatile group, perfect for festooning pergolas, creating green walls or adding to rooftop gardens. Depending on the species, they offer shade, screening, covering, cooling, colour, harvests, habitat, scent, flowers, design appeal and more. Some climbers even adapt to growing as groundcovers on embankments, providing habitat, helping with erosion control and acting as a living mulch. Others happily trail out of hanging baskets and grow up trellises from pots. Which climber you use will depend on your climate zone, space and design requirements. Here are 10 great options.

1 STEPHANOTIS OR MADAGASCAR JASMINE

(*Stephanotis floribunda*)

With deep green leathery leaves, this fast-growing evergreen climber makes a stunning specimen plant when trained up and over a pergola or onto a trellis, wall or fence. Its masses of long-lasting, beautifully scented, waxy white flowers are the *pièce de résistance*, elevating this climber into superstardom! Growing to about 5m tall, it can easily be trained over and around a window, door or archway, where it will add romantic visual and olfactory appeal. Stephanotis is perfect for gardens with a classical palette. It prefers warm climates but can be grown indoors in cooler areas.

- Warm temperate to tropical climates
- Full sun, semi-shade, sheltered position, rich and well-drained soil
- Good for: containers
- Excellent cut flower

2 HERALD'S TRUMPET

(*Beaumontia grandiflora*)

A vigorous, lesser known climber with large glossy leaves, this requires a sturdy support. Large, heavenly scented white trumpet blooms create a gorgeous display throughout spring and summer. Prune after flowering to maintain size, taking care to avoid its sticky white latex sap.

- Subtropical to tropical climates
- Full sun, good drainage, regular moisture, soil rich in organic matter
- Good for: pergolas, fences, arbours, tree stumps
- Semi-deciduous ►

3 BOUGAINVILLEA (*Bougainvillea* spp. & cvs)

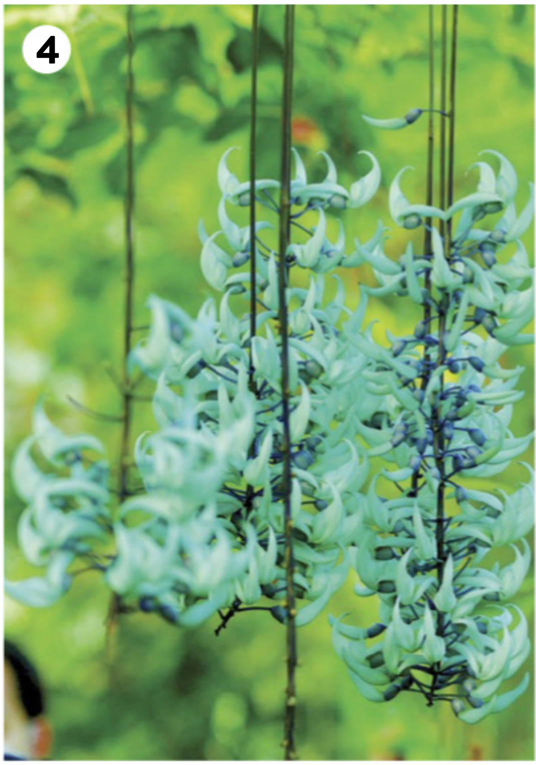
Tough and high on colour, the ever-popular bougainvillea comes in a variety of colours and sizes. Tall growers require strong support. Although they will clamber to the top of large trees or through tall shrubs, it's best to prevent this from occurring, as they can easily get out of control. Choose your planting location judiciously and prune regularly to keep the plant contained. Bursts of vibrant and colourful bracts appear throughout winter, spring and summer, depending on your location. Compact forms, such as the Bambino and Babybino ranges, are fabulous for smaller gardens or pots if you want the colour without the pruning. Avoid high-nitrogen fertilisers, as they will encourage leafy growth rather than flowers. Be aware that bougainvillea is listed as a weed in parts of Queensland and New South Wales. Avoid planting if you live in one of these areas.

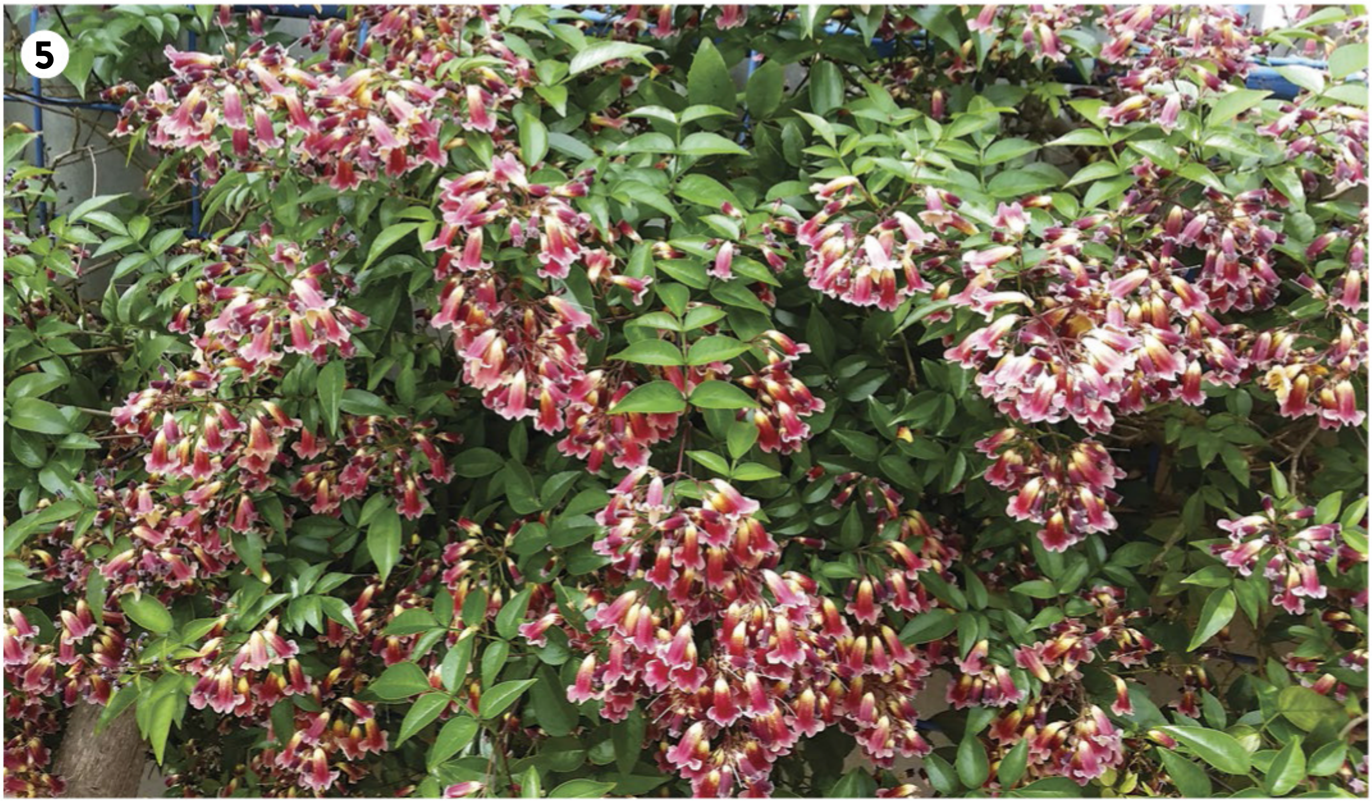
- Warm temperate to tropical climates
- Full sun, good drainage
- Good for: pergolas, fences, arbours, tree stumps, embankments, baskets, pots
- Dislikes root disturbance

4 JADE VINE (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*)

With its phenomenal pendulous blooms in a striking aqua colour, this tropical climber would have to be one of the most beautiful and ethereal flowering plants in the world. Although it thrives outdoors in warmer climates, it can be grown as an indoor plant in other areas. Train the plant onto a well-structured support that allows its incredible blooms to be appreciated. A long and tall arbour is ideal, as it also allows you to stroll beneath the magic.

- Subtropical to tropical climates (frost-sensitive, so minimum 5°C)
- Full sun, semi-shade
- Good for: pergolas, fences, arbours
- Flowers from late winter into spring





PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES, ISTOCK, ANGUS STEWART, GAP PHOTOS/JONATHAN BUCKLEY

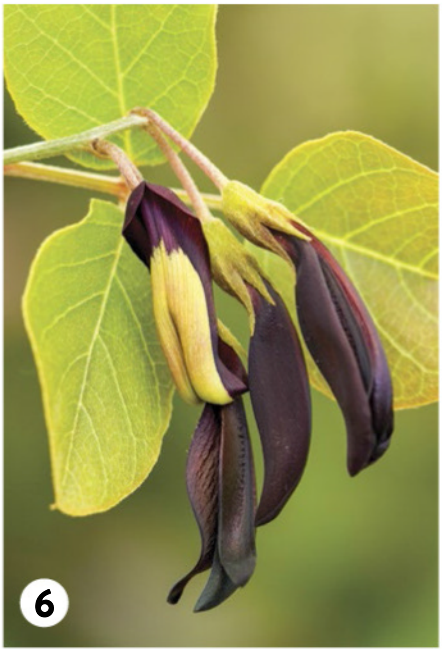
5 WONGA WONGA VINE (*Pandorea pandorana*)

This native twining climber is covered in clusters of beautiful bell-shaped flowers from late winter to summer, attracting birds and insects. The range of colours available includes pure white flowers and cream blooms with a purple throat. There's also 'Ruby Belle', which produces maroon flowers with a white interior, 'Golden Showers', which has deep yellow flowers with tinges of dark red, and the pretty blooms of 'Lemon Bells', which are a lighter yellow with maroon inside. All wonga wonga vines are fast growing, easy to care for and tolerate light frosts.

- All climates
- Full sun, semi-shade
- Good for: pergolas, fences, groundcover, green walls, string lines, pots with a trellis
- Vigorous – avoid planting near drains

6 BLACK CORAL PEA (*Kennedia nigricans*)

There are 13 species of *Kennedia* and all have lovely attributes, but for some serious wow factor, you can't go past this climber's eye-catching black and yellow pea flowers. Hailing from coastal areas in Western Australia, it likes free-draining soil and a sunny spot, and it flowers for most of the year. It's rather vigorous and will clamber over any structure in sight. Grown as a groundcover, it forms a large, dense mat with plenty of habitat potential. Prune after flowering to keep it contained.



- Cool temperate to subtropical climates
- Full sun, good drainage
- Good for: groundcover
- Fast growing
- Tolerates poor soil and light frost ►

8

9

7

10

7 FRASER ISLAND CREEPER (*Tecomanthe hillii*)

An evergreen climber endemic to coastal Queensland, with gloriously showy flowers borne in clusters off the stems in spring and summer. The waxy, bell-shaped blooms can be yellow, salmon pink, or pink with cream, and attract bees, butterflies and nectar-feeding birds.

- Warm temperate to tropical climates
- Full sun, semi-shade, good drainage
- Good for: pergolas, fences, arbours, trees

8 BOSTON IVY (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*)

Boston ivy will happily attach itself to a variety of surfaces with its sucker-like discs at the end of each tendril. The standout attribute of this fast-growing deciduous climber is its soft green foliage, which turns the most beautiful autumnal colours when the cooler weather arrives. It belongs to the grape family (Vitaceae) and isn't related to true ivy. It can leave marks on surfaces when removed.

- Cool climates for best colour
- Full sun, semi-shade
- Good for: fences, brickwork, buildings, verandahs, pergolas (perfect for summer shade and winter sun)

9 AUSTRALIAN CLEMATIS (*Clematis aristata*)

Clematis is a well-loved genus of over 200 species, including six that are native to Australia. Australian clematis – also called old man's beard or goat's beard – is a twining climber endemic to Australia's east coast from southern Queensland to Tasmania. Being dioecious, the clusters of off-white starry flowers are produced on plants that are either male or female. Flowers appear in spring and they're followed by a spectacular display of fluffy seed heads on the female plants. This is when it's most often observed in nature, scrambling up and into shrubs and trees.

- Cool temperate to subtropical climates
- Full sun, semi-shade
- Evergreen
- Self-seeding – naturalising but not invasive

10 SNAKE VINE (*Hibbertia scandens*)

Also known as guinea flower, this fast-growing climbing and scrambling plant makes a vibrant addition to the garden. Its large yellow flowers appear through spring and summer and contrast beautifully with the verdant foliage. They attract butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects to the garden. Allow the vine to sprawl over unsightly structures, or train it along a fence. Grown as a groundcover, it creates a dense, attractive mound. For added habitat potential, plant it near a stump or large log.

- Cool temperate to subtropical climates
- Full sun, semi-shade
- Suits exposed coastal gardens
- Drought tolerant once established

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Touch of the TROPICS

This fast-growing rainforest tree will bring a verdant vibe to any garden, and their fragrant yellow flowers will light up the neighbourhood, writes **AB BISHOP**

While some trees may not be considered natural 'leaders' or feature trees, they possess a certain *je ne sais quoi* that makes them desirable in any garden. The native frangipani (*Hymenosporum flavum*) slots into this category.

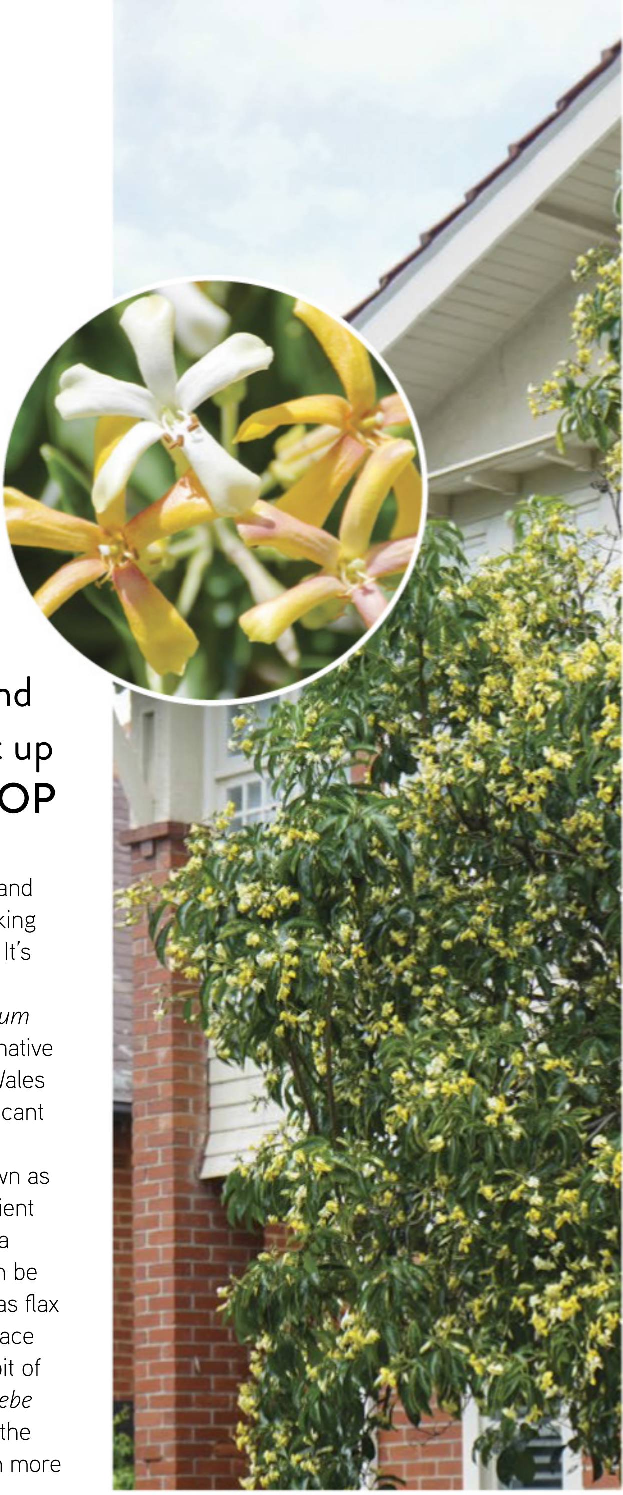
Its large and glossy mid-green leaves are a definite selling point because, let's face it, there aren't many medium-sized native trees that are adaptable to different climates and soils, are easily available, and evoke desirable tropical vibes. Its star-like cream flowers that age to a deep yellow, occasionally with striking red throats, are another highly appealing attribute.

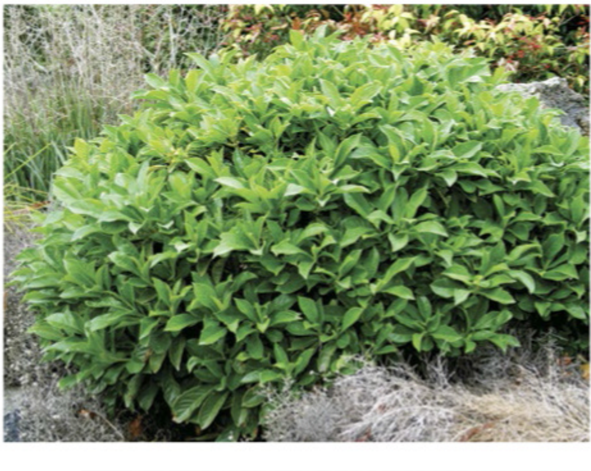
The masses of terminal flower clusters that appear from early spring to early summer are eye-catching. Their heady fragrance is like that of their unrelated namesake (the non-native frangipani, *Plumeria*) and will have you crossing the street to bury your nose in them. Make sure you don't inadvertently sniff up a bee or other insect at the same time, though! The flowers are magnets for them, along with nectarivorous and insectivorous birds. That's because native frangipani flowers are nectar-rich, unlike the exotic *Plumeria*, which lures nocturnal mothy pollinators with its sweet scent, but doesn't offer an equally sweet reward. How rude!

This attractive tree has a slender trunk with textured grey bark. It's generally conically shaped, has an open habit, and is relatively narrow for its height, making it a useful choice for smaller gardens. It's an excellent alternative to the closely related sweet pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*), which – even though it's native to eastern Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria – is regarded as a significant environmental weed in many areas.

Native frangipani is sometimes grown as a street tree, which indicates its resilient nature. Its lush appearance makes it a pleasing poolside option, where it can be underplanted with low growers such as flax lily (*Dianella* spp.), bromeliads or pigface (*Carpobrotus* and *Disphyma*). For a bit of height, grow small shrubs such as *Hebe* or *Rhaphiolepis* under it, or continue the tropical theme by underplanting it with more compact forms of native frangipani.

'Lushious' grows just 40–60cm tall and 1–1.5m wide and tolerates moist or dry conditions. 'Gold Nugget' grows 60cm–1m tall and wide. Both have a gardenia-like quality, but with the same golden-yellow flowers as other native frangipanis. These small shrub forms also make fabulous low hedges, borders or container specimens.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Native frangipani flowers turn from cream to yellow with age; these tall but narrow trees work well in small gardens; one of the dwarf forms, 'Lushious'.

AUSSIE NATIVE

PHOTO OMOMOMOM

The Tasmania Fire Service, the Government of South Australia and other organisations list it as a 'low flammability' plant, making it acceptable to plant within the Building Protection Zone on properties in bushfire-prone areas. (Always check specific restrictions for your area.)

care & maintenance

Native frangipani grows naturally along the eastern seaboard from the very tip of Far North Queensland to around Sydney. In the wild, the tree can grow 20–25m tall, but in cultivation it tends to reach around 6–10m tall and 4–6m wide, depending on the soil and climate in which it's growing.

It's surprisingly amenable to pretty much any soil type if it's well-drained. For sandy soil, it's advisable to incorporate compost at planting by mixing it through the soil before you backfill. Sandy soil leaches nutrients easily, so you'll need to apply a 2–3cm layer of compost annually. When planting into clay, break up the clods as you dig the hole to create an even tilth. There's no need to add compost to the backfill soil – simply apply a 2–3cm layer on top and let nature take its course.

All forms flower best in full sun but also perform admirably in semi-shade. For a tropical and subtropical plant, it copes surprisingly well in cool climates. However, it's not a huge fan of frost, particularly for its first couple of winters. In these areas, afford it some protection by growing it among other plants or near structures, and drape some lightweight frost cloth over it when frost is predicted, securing it for the night with pegs and removing it in the late morning.

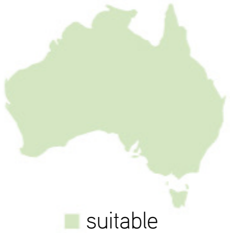
In dry-summer climates, supplementary watering is recommended, especially for the first few years while it establishes a good root system. Compost-enriched soils hold water better, and an annual application of a liquid soil-wetting agent can be beneficial if water doesn't soak into the soil easily. Apply fertiliser suitable for native plants in spring, and seaweed solution a few times a year. GA

at a glance

common name
native frangipani

botanic name
Hymenosporum flavum

plant type
fruiting bush
↑ 6–15m ↔ 3–7m
Dwarf varieties:
↑ 40–75cm ↔ 50cm–1.5m
☀ sun, semi-shade
spring or autumn
✿ spring to early summer



🟩 suitable

PHOTOS ISTOCK, AB BISHOP, BUSH MAGIK

sweet ALLURE

Displaying a diversity of shapes, sizes and colours, 'variety' could be melaleuca's middle name, and there's at least one to suit every garden, writes **FAYE ARCARO**

There's so much to love about melaleucas! You'll find them growing as both trees and shrubs. They're beautiful to look at, often fragrant, and the trees, over time, develop gnarled, sculptural trunks. Their showy bottlebrush-like, nectar-rich flowers come in a range of colours, and are beacons for insects and birds. Melaleucas cope with rain inundation as well as drought, which makes them highly suitable garden plants and one of the most future-ready groups.

Plants in the *Melaleuca* genus are commonly called paperbarks or honey myrtles. They're sometimes referred to as tea-trees, too, but this name is more commonly applied to the closely related *Leptospermum*. There are more than 250 Australian species of *Melaleuca*, most of which are endemic. And there may be more in the future, as all species of the popular bottlebrush genus *Callistemon* were transferred into *Melaleuca* a few years ago by international botanists – a move that was controversial and not supported by some Australian taxonomists, and at this stage, the two groups remain.

Melaleuca forests exist in every state, being almost as ubiquitous as acacias and eucalypts. These areas are often of significant ecological importance, providing habitat for a variety of fauna and fungi.

In Victoria, the endangered southern bell frog finds refuge in swamplands inhabited by swamp paperbark (*M. ericifolia*), which is threatened in Tasmania. The broad-leafed paperbark (*M. quinquenervia*) is the most common coastal species, and its leaves and flowers can be used to make a tea. Numerous Northern Territory species, such as the impressive weeping paperbark (*M. leucadendra*), have evolved to endure monsoonal rains. These varieties are often used as street trees.

Indigenous Australians living traditionally in parts of the Northern Territory used melaleuca in a variety of ways. The bark was perfect for creating sheaths for stone knives and spearheads. It was used as tinder for fires or to cover baking food. Bark was also a component of fish traps, and used as a material for making bandages, capes or blankets. As one of the larger diameter trees in the north, melaleucas were used to make canoes. Being rich in nectar, the flowers can also be sucked or soaked in water to make a sweet drink.

As garden plants, many melaleucas are drought tolerant and survive well with little to no supplementary water once they are established, depending on the climate. Of course, when you choose a local species, all you need to do is dig a hole, water the soil, soak the plant in a bucket of water until air the bubbles cease, and plant. I've had great success with endemic species on our property in Jandakot, Perth.

In climates with rainy winters, it's best to plant in autumn. I find that tubestock plants settle in well, they're cheap to buy and only require a small hole. For sandy soils, add clay and homemade compost to help with moisture and nutrient retention. It's a good idea to apply supplementary water for the following two summers to ensure good root establishment, then leave them to look after themselves.

Melaleucas don't necessarily require feeding, but you'll notice the difference in terms of growth rate, overall health and flowering if you do. Choices include a complete fertiliser designed for native plants, seaweed solution, blood and bone or even pelletised chicken manure.

Apply a layer of mulch to suppress weeds and create a finished look. Placing one or two logs nearby will help to hold moisture in the ground and provide habitat.

Most melaleucas remain free of pests and diseases, but will occasionally be attacked by the paperbark sawfly, which chews the leaves and pupates under the bark. If birds don't take care of these, prune any affected small branches. Scale can attack, too, but is unlikely to become a serious issue. ►

LEFT
Melaleuca lanceolata has beautiful white blooms – which are a magnet for insects – and a spectacular gnarled ornamental trunk.

PHOTO ISTOCK

PHOTOS ISTOCK, ALAMY, AB BISHOP

MELALEUCA MAGIC: TOP SIX PICKS

Melaleuca bracteata 'Revolution Gold'

This fast-growing tree has interesting gold leaves that contrast beautifully with plants that have burgundy or other deep-coloured foliage. It will thrive – and shine vibrantly – when planted in full sun. A lovely small tree just 3–4m tall, it casts useful shade, provides habitat for birds, bees and butterflies, and tolerates light frost. Its flowers and foliage can be cut to display indoors. For a wider, more resilient hedge, plant them in a zigzag pattern rather than a straight line, and trim regularly to maintain a compact habit and smaller size.

Robin redbreast bush (*M. lateritia*)

A pretty and resilient shrub for gardens of any size, growing 2m high and 1.5m wide. It produces scarlet flowers from spring to autumn that contrast with its light green foliage. Lightly prune after flowering to encourage a dense habit, or prune hard if needed. Suits a full sun or semi-shade position, and tolerates nutritionally poor, dry or waterlogged soil. Fast growing, it's an excellent choice for revegetation projects. Although it will cope with wind and salt, it can be frost sensitive.

M. violacea (prostrate form)

The low-growing form of this Western Australian native grows in sandy or heavy clay soils. It will tolerate low water, as well as damp conditions. It has a dense habit suitable for shady areas or creating frog habitat. It grows 1m high and 20cm wide.

Thyme honey myrtle (*M. thymifolia* 'Cotton Candy')

This gorgeous bush has clusters of lolly-pink flowers that resemble fairy floss. Growing to a diminutive 50cm, it's a great choice for containers, or you could plant it as a living edge to a garden bed. It responds well to pruning, which serves the dual purpose of developing even denser foliage, and encouraging more flowers. It's suitable for a rockery or next to garden steps. It's drought tolerant once established. For a natural yet cohesive look, create groups of odd numbers throughout the garden.

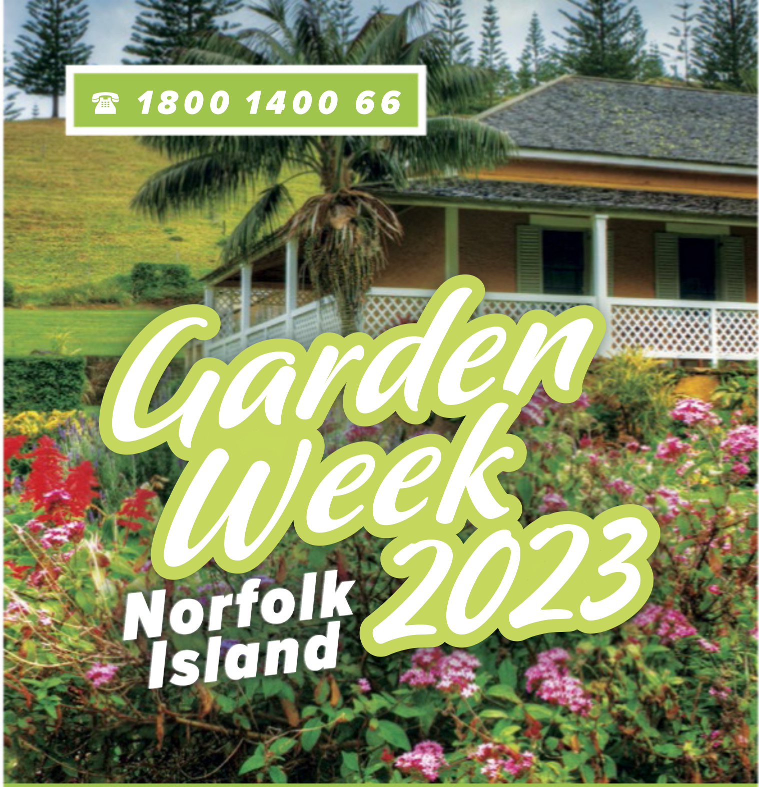
Showy honey myrtle (*M. nesophila*)

Varieties can get as big as 5m high and 4m wide, making them a great windbreak – a useful addition to any coastal garden. I planted three of these 20 years ago and have done little to them since. They thrive on neglect and no water, and make a great understorey plant, competing with tall gum trees. To top it all off, the birds love them and the pompom flowers are a magnet for insects. For smaller gardens, 'Little Nessie' is a dense evergreen that grows to around 2m high and 2m wide and responds well to pruning for topiary and hedging. 'Narrow Nessie' is a taller, slimmer and more compact variety, growing up to 3m high and 1.3m wide. Availability to some states is restricted due to biosecurity. The fragrant mauve pompom flowers of this low maintenance plant are a welcome addition to summer when not much else is out.

Moonah (*M. lanceolata*)

This large shrub or small tree (to 8m) is endemic to much of the southern half of the continent, including Western Australia's Rottnest Island, where you're likely to spot a quokka or two lazing about in its shade, while the canopy above buzzes with action. It's a photographer's dream plant, and one I've spent hours studying on summer days, gazing at insects in the white blooms. Such a lovely way to spend the holidays! GA

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
A broad-leafed paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) in bloom; a close look at the white blooms of *M. quinquenervia*; showy honey myrtle (*M. nesophila*) has beautiful mauve pompom flowers in summer; *M. thymifolia*; the gorgeous bright red blooms of the robin redbreast bush (*M. lateritia*).



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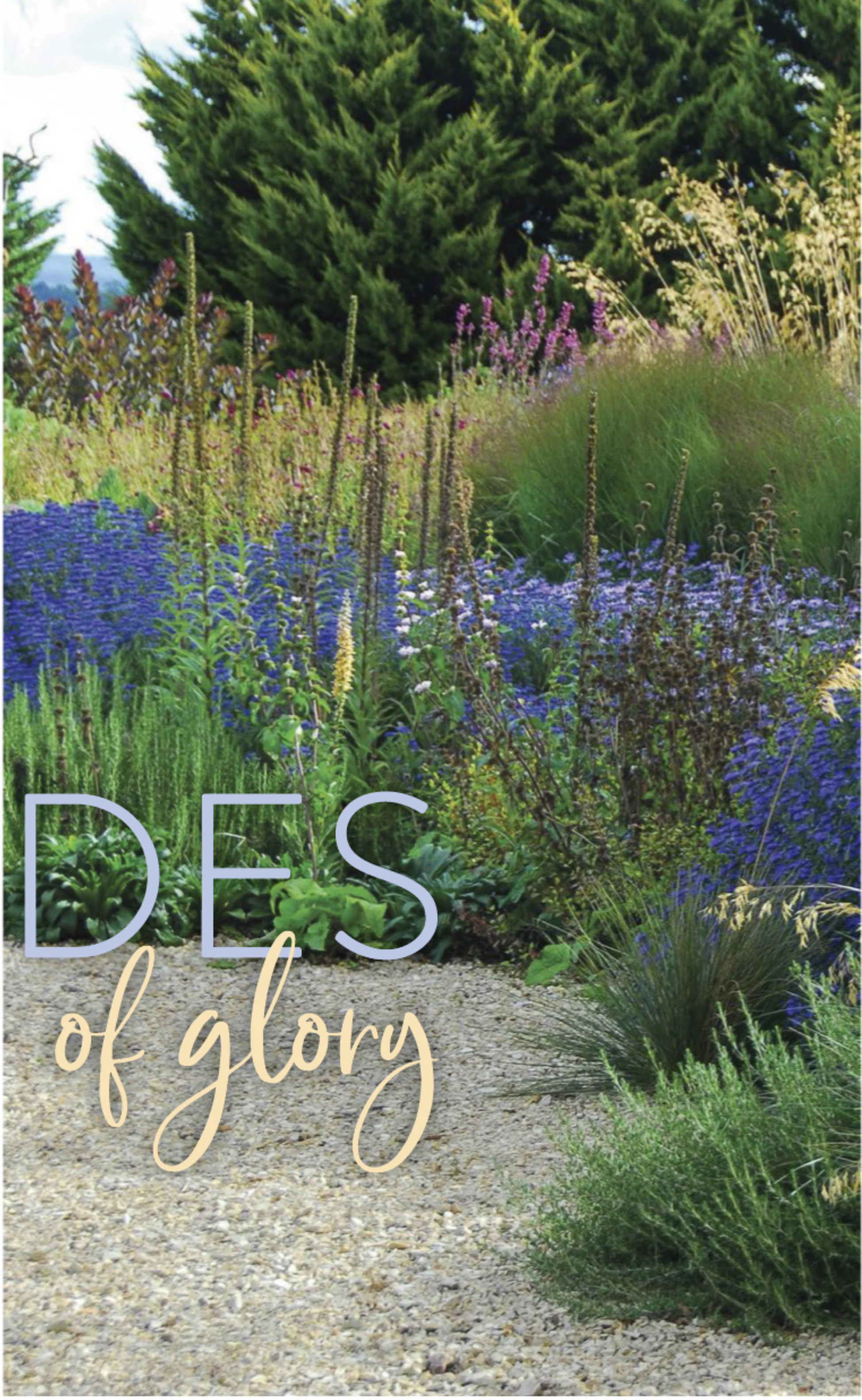
Ornamental grasses bring unique beauty and movement to our landscapes, writes **MICHAEL McCOY,** plus, they play a key role in increasing biodiversity



BLADES *of glory*

PHOTO MICHAEL McCOY

What is it about grasses used as ornamental plants that is so divisive? There's a group of Australian gardeners who hate them outright and are determined to never use them in the garden. Then there's the group that loves grasses and will use them at any opportunity. But the biggest group, by far, are the gardeners who like them used discerningly and in context but have little confidence in placing them effectively in their own plantings.

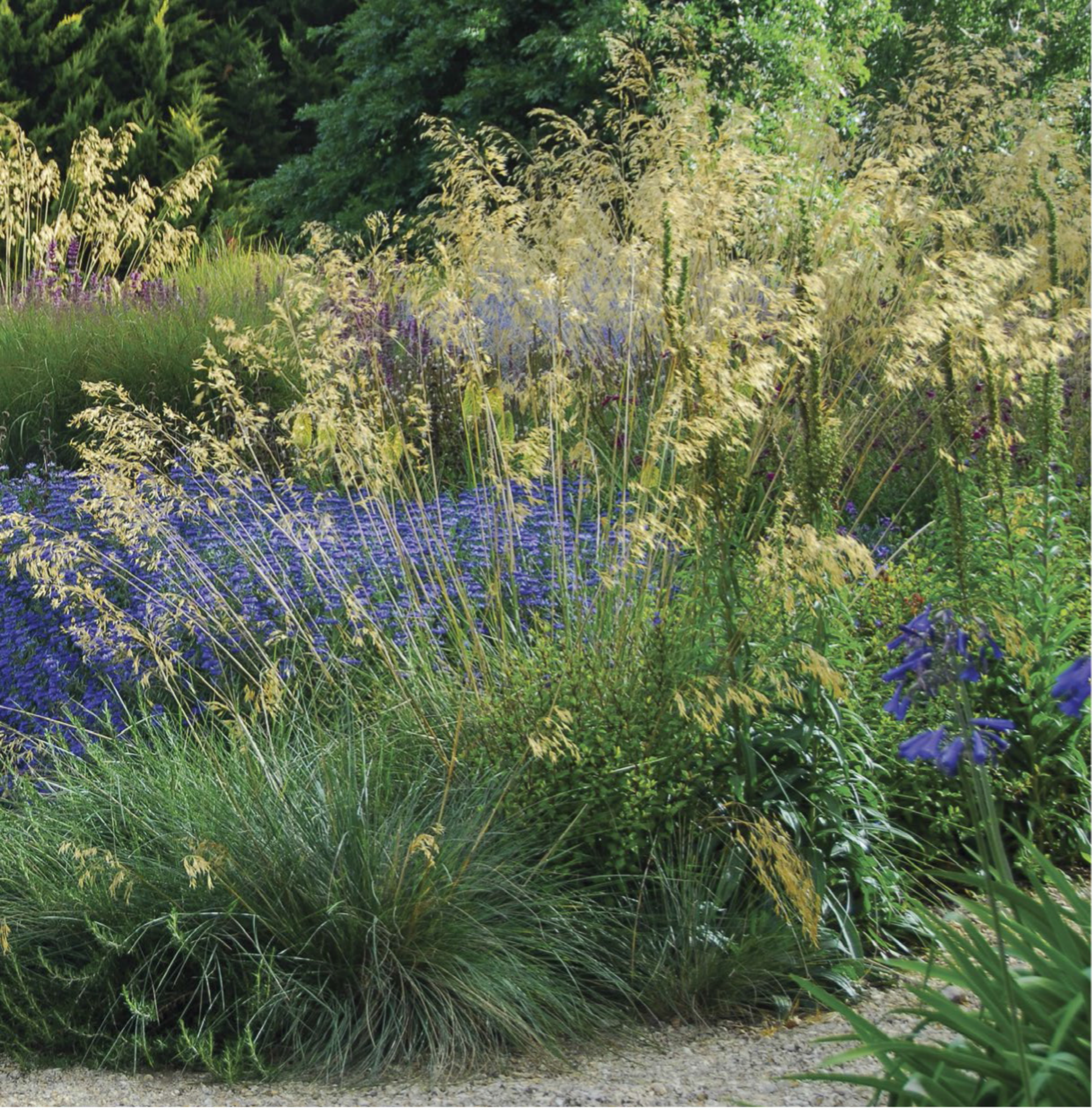
Those in the 'hate' group, if anecdote is a fair guide, seem to have nurtured their attitude in a rural upbringing, where paddock grasses always sent snake alarm bells ringing in their head. This kind of childhood conditioning is hard to undo, but its arguable that any knee- or waist-deep vegetation, whether that is grasses or coastal heath or saltbush, is equally attractive to, and concealing of, snakes.

Others just think grasses are a waste of space, being florally modest. They are certainly not 'showy', but any habitual reader of these pages will have long ago come to understand that every A-list celebrity plant in your garden needs to be surrounded by co-stars and even 'extras' in order to really shine. Grasses are the visual companion plant par excellence.

Any attempt to invalidate peoples' beliefs often results in them doubling down, but I find the most powerful form of persuasion is to present a positive example or two. To that end, here are a few good reasons to grow grasses. No doubt you grass-lovers will think of more.

TEXTURE

First and foremost, this group of plants uniquely expands the breadth of foliage textures in our potential plant palette. They're nearly always the finest foliages in any landscape – often by far. And when



it comes to textural diversity, more is more. There's never a case in which limiting the range of foliage textures is beneficial. Of course, at times, you may want to limit the colour range of flowers, or the colour range of leaves. You may also have a situation in which you want to limit the height range of the plants, or their provenance. But foliage texture always needs to be maximised, and to choose to eliminate grasses altogether would drastically reduce the textural spectrum.

MOVEMENT

The structure and formation of grasses – with their narrow or flat blades radiating out from a single point, and often arching gracefully in the process – makes them susceptible to any passing zephyr. Some shimmer in response, some lean like ►

ABOVE
Celtica gigantea in late summer, contrasting beautifully with the aptly named *Caryopteris* x *clandonensis* 'Heavenly Blue'. Grasses with tall flower heads that hover well above the foliage are always more effective when placed among plants that match the grass's foliage height, rather than its flower height.

windsocks, and others bounce about as if the leaf blades and flower stems were spring-loaded. In a truly stiff breeze, this can border on being alarming, but mostly the result is a playful animation of the kind offered by passing butterflies and birds.

PATTERN

Contemporary planting design has moved away from 'borders' of perfectly staged and presented plants, and more into mass plantings, often inspired by how plants are distributed in a natural or wild setting. Think, for instance, of wildflowers in a grassy meadow. The same flower echoes around your field of view, with dense clumps here and there, linked by outlying individuals, such that your eye plays over the whole space, gaining pleasure as much from the spangling patterns as the individual beauty of the blooms. To capture this same magic in the garden requires plants that have a legibility in either flower or form, so that our eye can engage with them and register the repetition. Grasses are one of the few groups of plants that have a sufficiently distinct natural form – without regular clipping – to provide a repeating focal point.

Here are my top picks...

TALL GRASSES (1.8M+)

Golden oats (*Celtica gigantea* syn. *Stipa gigantea*)

One of the most beautiful grasses of all, with golden oat-like seed heads to 1.8m, at least a metre clear of its 80cm clumps of narrow evergreen foliage. It's good for cool temperate climates in drier soils with good drainage. It's best used as a single specimen within lower plantings.

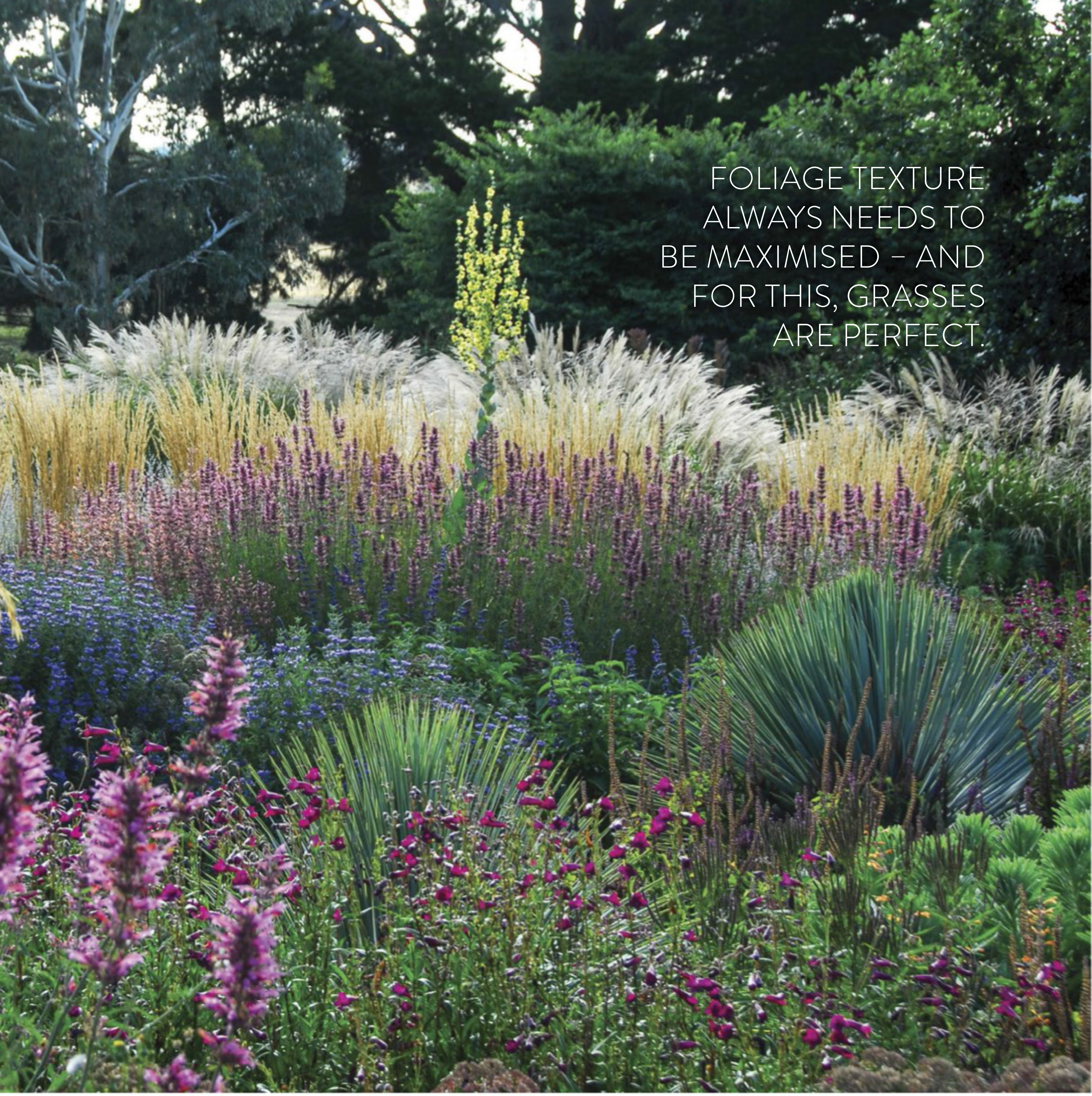
Miscanthus transmorrisonensis

A semi-deciduous grass (fortunately, it can be treated as deciduous, allowing it to be cut to the ground at the end of winter), it quickly creates a great dome of arching, brilliant green foliage to 1.5m, which by midsummer transforms itself into an explosive fountain of silver flower heads up to 2m. It's happy in moderately dry to poorly drained soils. It can be used as individuals or in large sweeps. (This plant is included in *M. sinensis* and may be sold as such.)

Calamagrostis x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'

Considered by many nurseries around the world to be their best-selling grass, this deciduous species starts out in spring as an erupting mound of low-grade leaves to 70cm that you'd swear was a threatening weed, only to then excel itself with purple gnat-like flowers atop wire-thin stems to 2m that stand bolt-upright as they develop into golden seed heads. It's best used in sweeps or clumps, or as repeated individual plants. It copes with a wide range of soil conditions and soil moisture but requires a cool winter to flower well. ►

PHOTOS MICHAEL MCCOY, ISTOCK



FOLIAGE TEXTURE ALWAYS NEEDS TO BE MAXIMISED – AND FOR THIS, GRASSES ARE PERFECT.

ABOVE
The golden grass of *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' in the middle ground, with *Agastache* 'Sweet Lili' and *Celtica gigantea* in the foreground.

LEFT TO RIGHT
Celtica gigantea; *Miscanthus transmorrisonensis*; *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'.

MEDIUM GRASSES
(80cm–1.2m)

Common tussock grass (*Poa labillardierei*)

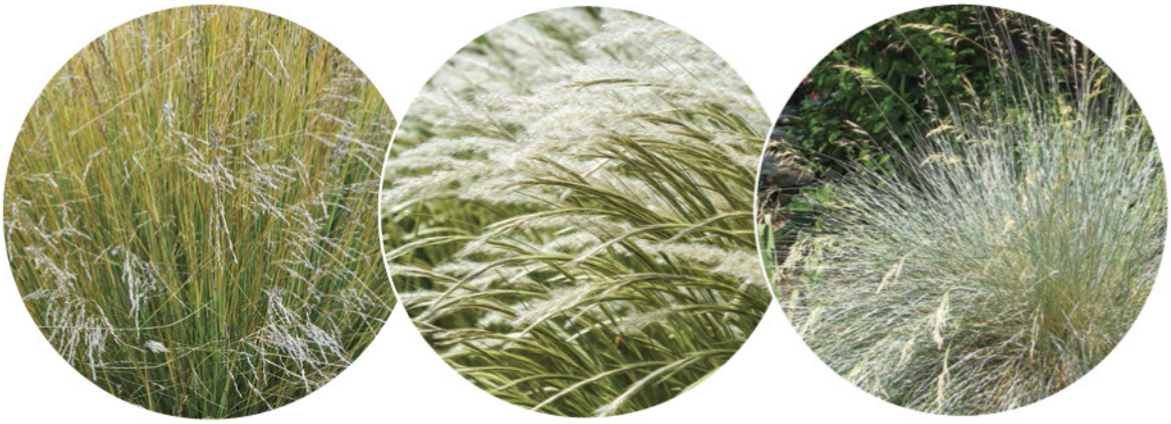
Poa lab, as it's known in the trade, is capable of arresting beauty, despite frequently being devalued in plantings next to freeways that receive little to no maintenance. 'Suggan Buggan' is a particularly good grey-leafed selection, but all are good if cut back hard every year to avoid being totally overtaken by their old, dead leaves and flower heads. It has super-fine leaves to 80cm, and modest flowers to 1.2m. Good drainage is required, but it's otherwise unfussy about soil.

Jarava ichu syn. *Stipa ichu*

New to the market in Australia, it has very fine leaves to 50cm, which give rise to silvery feathers about 1m tall that bounce and ribbon in the breeze. It's fabulous among mixed perennials. Good drainage is required and it's very drought tolerant.

Blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*)

Helictotrichon has an almost identical form to the desirable *Celtica gigantea* (syn. *Stipa giantea*), but at a much more modest height. Foliage is strikingly silver to 60cm, making for a pronounced contrast with the widely and elegantly spaced golden seed heads that grow to 1m. It requires perfect drainage and is best in moderately 'hungry' soils.



ABOVE
The straw flower heads of *Festuca glauca* and the bronze foliage of *Carex testacea* playing among *Euphorbia* 'Copton Ash'.

LEFT TO RIGHT
Poa labillardierei; *Jarava ichu*; *Helictotrichon sempervirens*.

PHOTOS MICHAEL MCCOY, SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK

Placement tips

- **To be visually effective, grasses have to contrast with their plant companions. A big planting or 'collection' of different grasses never works. It's better to use one form in a great big sweep, or several clumps, alongside plants that contrast in foliage and form.**
- **Grasses also need to be placed with plants that match the height of their foliage, not their flowers. This will allow the grass flower heads to hover over the top.**

Habitat benefits

Many grasses are host plants for butterflies and moths, and their seeds are eaten by numerous animals, including birds, many of which also build nests in or with the foliage. Echidnas, native rodents and marsupials, such as bandicoots, dunnarts and quolls, will sleep and nest under mature grasses. (Add small logs for extra habitat potential.) Lizards use them to traverse gardens safely, and frogs will hang out under them where it's safe, cool and moist. **AB Bishop, horticultural editor**

SHORT GRASSES (BELOW 80CM)

New Zealand sedge (*Carex testacea*)

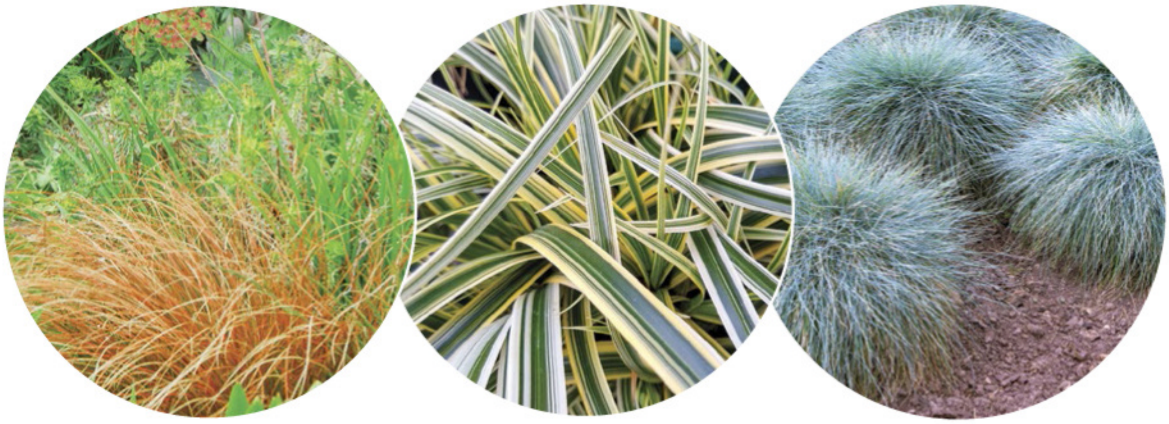
The carexes are technically sedges rather than grasses, but they look exactly like a grass and can be used like a grass in the garden. *Carex testacea* creates a perfect dome of fine, bronze-tinted foliage to 60cm that turns strikingly orange in cold weather. Its flowers are hidden among its leaves, so can't be considered a further feature, but both the colour and the strong shape of this sedge make for a powerful statement in broad-scale plantings. *C.* 'Frosted Curls' is nearly identical but for its silver-grey colouring. Both cope with damp to wet soils through to substantially dry conditions. (Note: It is a declared weed in Tasmania.)

Carex 'Feather Falls'

A recent introduction, this one has clear variegation on arching evergreen leaves just 30cm high. Early feedback from home gardeners suggests this grass is super tough under a wide range of conditions, creating a reliable cascade of smart leaves that recover rapidly from any necessary cut back. It will cope with a range of soil conditions, from damp through to substantially dry.

Blue fescue (*Festuca glauca*)

A striking blue-grey grass with leaves to 20cm, giving rise to golden flowers at 30cm. Like most blue or grey grasses, *Festuca glauca* is at its best when young, before it becomes congested with dead leaves. Replacement every two or three years with self-sown seedlings (nearly always guaranteed) is the best management strategy. Soil must be at the drier end of the spectrum and very well drained. GA

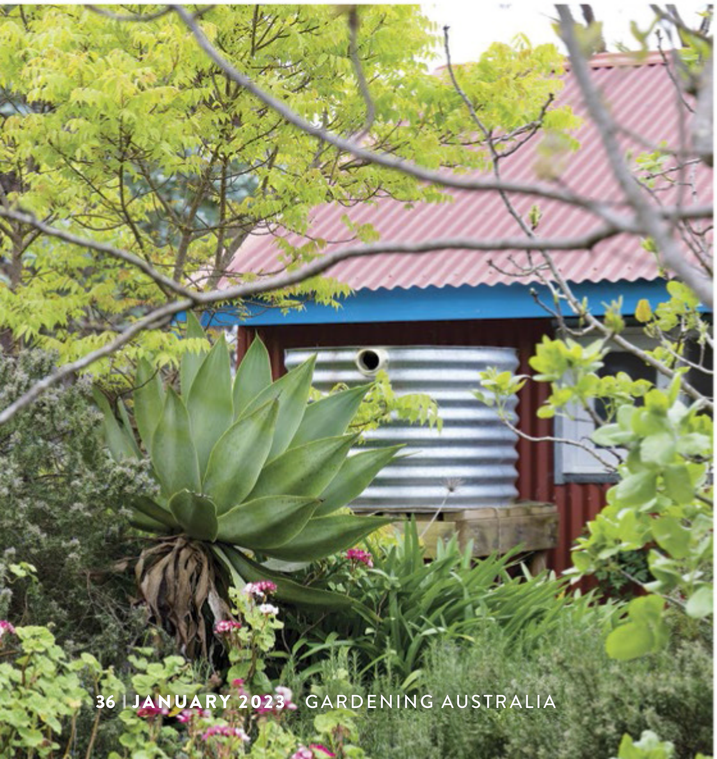


LEFT TO RIGHT *Carex testacea*; *C.* 'Feather Falls'; *Festuca glauca*.

high & dry

The owners of this garden in South Australia gave up trying to control it long ago. Instead, they work with what nature delivers...

words **JENNY BALDWIN**
photography **ITALO VARDARO**



Wind. Most gardeners hate it. But in this garden, Boat's End, located on South Australia's Fleurieu Peninsula (Ngarrindjeri and Peramangk country), wind is the defining feature, along with sloping terrain, impoverished soil and hot, dry summers.

Sarah and Roger Budarick decided they were up for all this when they bought the bare block in 1999, seeking a tree change out of their home city of Adelaide. The drawcards, of course, were the land size (about 16ha) and the view – a sweeping vista of river flats, where Currency Creek and the Finniss River join the lower Murray on its final run to the sea.

"Roger wanted a bigger shed and I wanted a bigger garden," says Sarah. "We knew this place had its challenges, such as no water – the only water was the water that fell from the sky, and the annual rainfall here is less than 480mm.

"However, it was at a time when people were talking about climate change and making their gardens drought tolerant, and this was an opportunity for us to experiment with that."

The experiment started with Sarah testing things from her Adelaide garden. While waiting for their house to sell, she'd come down to the new property on weekends, with plants in tow. Few survived. Canna lilies were shredded. Roses failed. "Plants were literally blown out of the ground," she says. "A lot of stuff died."

They had some luck with indigenous tree species. Various acacias did well, as did pink gums (*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*). The gums still self-seed freely around the property. Sarah also had success with two pride of Madeira plants (*Echium candicans*). Initially eaten by cattle, they recovered, flowered and multiplied. Every echium on the property comes from those plants. "They self-seed, and you never know what colours you'll get," Sarah says. "They dominate the garden."

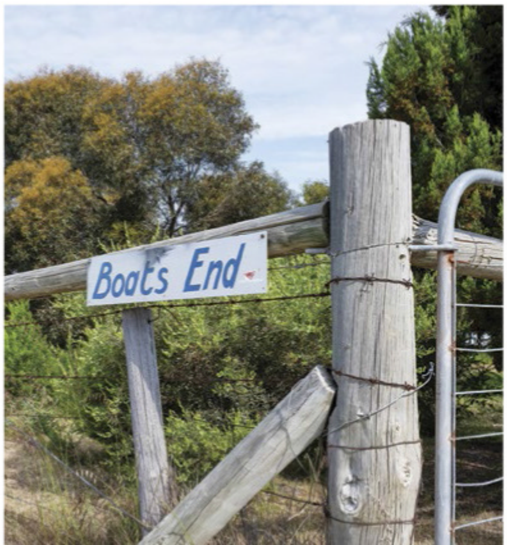
The garden is a series of large, richly textured beds dolloped at intervals along the slope and edged by paths of crushed rock. Low growers are interspersed with plants that have good clippable bulk. Some shrubs are left loose and others are hedged into mounds or balls. There are few straight lines, and no hard edges or symmetry. Weeds are tolerated to a point; they have to be, as time and energy don't always allow for prompt removal. ►

LEFT, FROM TOP
Sarah and Roger enjoying their garden; the colourful rock rose *Cistus* x *purpureus* 'Brilliancy'; a bold agave planted near the shed.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
The view towards Currency Creek; *Teucrium fruticans* shaped into a ball and blue chalksticks; the property entrance; purple statice plants.

PREVIOUS PAGE
Masses of pride of Madeira plants (*Echium candicans*), which self-seed throughout the garden and blend beautifully with the countryside.

THIS GARDEN IS SO ANCHORED IN ITS SETTING IT'S HARD TO TELL WHERE THE EDGES ARE



Having done all the 'right' things in the early days – adding organic material, applying mulch, and so on – Sarah came to realise it made no difference to whether a plant made it or not. She stopped trying to manipulate the conditions, and focused on finding plants that felt at home. Those that made the cut include a few Australian natives, but there are more exotics, especially plants from South Africa. Plants such as gazanias, honey flower (*Melianthus* spp.), *Salvia africana-lutea* and African wild rosemary (*Eriocephalus africanus*) have proved easier to grow than natives. Sometimes they're too easy – "I need to take the *africana-lutea* in hand," Sarah says. "It's smothering other things."

Stalwarts of the Mediterranean garden appear, too, from the vibrant rock rose 'Brilliancy' (*Cistus* x *purpureus*) to lavenders, rosemary, aeoniums, wormwood and agave – including the huge century plant (*Agave americana*) with its towering flower spikes.

Any plant that has proven itself is repeated through the garden, either by deliberate planting, wind-blown seeds or bird droppings. Sarah doesn't mind self-seeders taking up random positions in the garden. "If it fits and it looks okay, I'm happy for it to stay."

This spirit of acceptance is central to the way Sarah gardens now. Her philosophy is: "Work with what you've got. Don't make massive changes to the soil." And perhaps controversially, she says, "I question the universal need to mulch." Over time she has observed that her soil – sand on top of hard clay – is largely self-correcting. Water-repellent through the parched summers, it becomes saturated with winter rains, and that's taken up by the clay. "If I mulch, rain doesn't penetrate the soil. So, I don't mulch."

This garden is so anchored in its setting it's hard to tell where the edges are. By repeating colours of the borrowed landscape – the blues, greys, browns and yellows – Sarah has melded her dry garden creation with the natural bush and river flats below.

As we meander back to the house, a falcon swoops overhead. "It's amazing the birdlife that's appeared," says Roger. "At first, it was magpies and crows, and now we're seeing finches, wrens, honeyeaters, blue wrens and wedge-tailed eagles."

Asked if he helps in the garden, Roger and Sarah both nod. "Edges and hedges!" Roger also helps with anything heavy or requiring construction. This means if Sarah has an idea, she likes to run it past her husband. "I almost dread it," Roger smiles. "Sarah appears and says, 'Roger, I've been *thinking...*'!" GA

LEFT, FROM TOP
Nasturtiums spilling over a gabion wall that Roger built; the gate at the end of the garden leads to the paddock; dainty Geraldton wax.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
Pride of Madeira, brightly coloured rock roses, towering gums and *Agave americana* grow densely around the house; gazanias are planted in large drifts throughout the garden; a pink gum (*Eucalyptus fasciculosa*) underplanted with *Coleus argentatus* and correas.

food *for* thought

For this community-minded pair, their bush food nursery is about much more than the plants – it's a place where people of all cultures can connect and learn

words **AB BISHOP** photography **SUE STUBBS**

When Clarence Bruinsma and Adam Byrne met at an Aboriginal community gathering six years ago, they realised they both had a passion for bush foods and a deep desire to 'care for Country' and 'give back to mob'. At that time, neither could forsee that their shared ideals would lead them to start a business together, and that it would take shape as a thriving social enterprise nursery, a learning hub and a gathering space for both Aboriginal people and the wider community.

When you consider the professional backgrounds of this energetic duo (Clarence is a school education officer, and Adam has a background in graphic design and landscaping), and their cultural aspirations, plant-obsessed natures and empathetic mindsets, you can see how it led to their Bush to Bowl enterprise on Garigal Country, in Terrey Hills, Sydney.

Here, Adam and Clarence grow about 35 types of bush food, including climbers,

groundcovers, shrubs, grasses and small trees that provide roots, leaves, fruit, nectar, berries, herbs and legumes. Seedlings can be purchased online or at the nursery.

"We established the nursery to provide meaningful jobs for Aboriginal people in a culturally safe environment, doing work that they enjoy," says Clarence. "They are caring for Country... they help customers add more native plants to their gardens, which adds nutrients to the soil, reduces water usage and provides food and medicine.

"Customers really enjoy connecting with our Aboriginal staff, hearing about their various Cultures, and how we traditionally used and continue to use bush foods today."

Having taught personal development, health, and physical education in schools for more than 14 years, Clarence now balances family life with his business commitments, including working as an Aboriginal education consultant.

Growing up on Yaegl Country (around Coffs Harbour, New South Wales) gave Clarence a front-row seat to understanding the many benefits of bush foods. "I'm careful about what foods and how much I put into my body," he says. "Our native plant foods are packed with essential minerals, vitamins and protein, so you can eat less but still get all the nutrients you need. Kakadu plums, for example, have 100 times the vitamin C of oranges, ►

ABOVE
Adam (*left*) and Clarence (*right*) propagate thousands of cuttings each year to try and meet an increasing demand, as more people fall in love with these unique flavours.

OPPOSITE
Produce is collected in a goolamon (this one is made from broad-leafed paperbark), an object traditionally used for collecting water, winnowing grain and in smoking ceremonies.

> “PEOPLE WHO ARE OPEN TO TRYING THESE NEW FLAVOURS AND TEXTURES ALWAYS WANT MORE!”

while saltbush and coastal plants such as warrigal greens and sea purslane contain fibre, protein and antioxidants. They’re flavoursome and store salt in their leaves, so we can swap out normal salt for nutritious plants instead. People who are open to trying these new flavours and textures always want more!”

Garigal man Adam’s main focus within the business is teaching and, in particular, sharing his plant and Cultural knowledge with schools and organisations, but with his landscaping expertise, he’s the go-to man for those customers who are looking to create a bush food or Cultural garden.

In his designs, Adam showcases endemic flora and eschews the use of chemicals and unnecessary hardscaping. He focuses on creating usable, engaging spaces where kids and adults can smell and touch the plants, pick some fruit and simply enjoy being outdoors.

“Regeneration aspects and softscaping align more with my values of caring for Country than traditional landscaping. These bushland-style gardens bring local wildlife in, too – the lizards, insects and birds.”

For Clarence and Adam, creating these kinds of gardens speaks to the Aboriginal values and philosophies around caring for Country that are inextricably linked with the environment and their lives. “We need a lot of Country to be healed, and more plants in the ground is a good thing,” says Adam.

Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) is one plant they say they find particularly useful. It’s highly ornamental, sequesters carbon, provides habitat and, with roots up to 1m deep, draws nutrients and moisture from the subsoil. Its seeds have been used by Aboriginal people for millennia as a grain source for bread making. Endemic to almost everywhere on the continent, it offers a highly nutritious grain alternative that’s good for the environment, too.

Although Adam and Clarence need to ‘wear many hats’ as their business grows, family always comes first. “Being busy suits our personalities, but it’s important to slow down and take time for yourself and your family,” says Adam.

For the sporty pair, this means finding time to play their beloved touch footy – “there’s a bit of a competitive edge between us,” laughs Adam – and surfing or simply jumping in the ocean between parenting. “It’s all connected because we’re Saltwater People, and taking care of yourself and your community is taking care of Country.”

For Australia’s First Nations people, the physical and spiritual interconnectedness ►

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Native thyme (*Prostanthera incisa*) adds minty flavours to food and is also used medicinally; eucalyptus leaves are burned to create smoke, which aids in seed germination (and it smells great, too!); messages of respect and Culture inform visitors; Clarence picks lemon myrtle leaves (*Backhousia citriodora*), which are perfect for making a delicious tea; bushfoods are many and varied; Adam and Clarence with a selection of their produce; kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) seeds.

BUSH TO BOWL
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
BUSH TO BOWL
THE TEAM AT BUSH TO BOWL ACKNOWLEDGES THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF COUNTRY, THE GARIGAL TO THE NORTH, KAYMAYGAL TO THE SOUTH & DURRAMATTAGAL TO THE WEST. WE AKNOWLEDGE THEIR CONTINUED CONNECTIONS TO LAND, WATER & SKY.
For thousands of years Mob have been using fire to hunt animals maintain ecosystems and manage the land. In practice called Cultura Burning (fire stick fa g or Cool Burnin small alight derbrush cess rates ferred

“THE ROOTS OF BULBINE LILY ARE USED LIKE POTATO. I LOVE FRYING THEM IN A HOT PAN WITH OLIVE OIL.”

between plants and animals is overlaid with more than 60,000 years of observation.

“The golden wattle is part of the whale story from this area,” says Adam. “When they’re flowering, the whales are migrating, chasing mullet and prawn. This meant that at this time, a lot of the Saltwater mob would fish and catch a feed.”

Cultural knowledge like this – about all aspects of the environment – is shared through songlines. These auditory ‘maps’ of features of the land were memorised and sung by travellers moving around for trading or ceremonies. They include an intimate understanding of the medicinal and edible qualities of plants, which Adam and Clarence enjoy learning about from relatives, and sharing with others – albeit, often with a contemporary twist!

“Warrigal greens in tempura batter is delicious,” says Clarence, who likes to experiment with cooking bush foods. “The roots of the bulbine lily are used like potato. Back in the day, mob cooked them on a fire, but I love frying them in a hot pan with olive oil or butter.”

Prostanthera species are commonly known as mint bushes, but *P. ovalifolia* and *P. rotundifolia* can be used as an oregano substitute, and *P. incisa* in place of thyme. “I use them fresh or dried on bruschetta, pasta or fish,” says Adam. “The true mints – *Mentha australis* and *M. satureioides* – can be used like this, too, and are also very tasty added to drinks.”

“River mint [*M. australis*] looks good in the garden and grows easily in the sun or shade,” adds Clarence. “It can also be used for headaches, upset tummies – even nits! Rubbing crushed leaves and flowers through the hair smells much nicer than chemicals!”

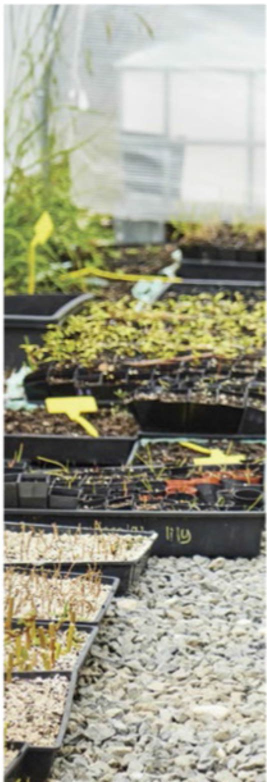
Bush basil (*Coleus graveolens* syn. *Plectranthus graveolens*) is a 1m shrub with pretty blue flower spikes and aromatic leaves that can be used fresh in a salad (sparingly) or dried. “Pop them in a low-heat oven with the door open – or for a better colour, flavour and texture, dry them in the sun,” recommends Clarence.

Adam and Clarence may be busy, but they’re dedicated to sharing knowledge of their Culture and plants. Whether they’re leading bush tucker tours through nearby bushland, conducting Cultural workshops or advising volunteers, their appreciation of connecting with others shines through.

“We have incredible volunteers that inspire us and create a feeling of kinship,” says Adam. “Some travel from far away, they bring their bubs, and come from all walks of life. Everyone deserves to learn about the traditional culture of the land. Mob benefit from these connections, too – it’s a part of the journey of healing and it makes my spirit get stronger.” GA

To learn more about caring for Country, follow Adam and Clarence on Instagram @bush_to_bowl, and check out their workshops and blog at bushtobowl.com

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Bulbine lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*); plum pines (*Podocarpus elatus*) ready for sale – eat the fruit fresh or add it to jam; *Kunzea ambigua* can be used in sweet or savoury dishes; poly tunnels allow for year-round plant production.



BUSH TO BOWL

into the FUTURE

Resilient and adaptable plants are the key to creating gardens that cope in times of drought and deluge, according to co-authors **ANGUS STEWART** and his daughter, **EMMA STEWART**, in their book, *Futureproof Your Garden*. In this preview, they share their favourite go-to plants for futureproofing

In a world where our climate is changing before our very eyes, it is obvious that, as well as taking measures to mitigate these changes, we also need to *adapt* to it at the same time. One of the key things climate scientists are telling us is that weather events such as droughts will occur more frequently in the future, so learning how to grow more plants with less water is an obvious place to start when it comes to futureproofing your garden. And let's not forget the challenge too much water can bring, in the form of devastating floods. The key is to make your garden more productive and resilient, regardless of the extreme climatic conditions that arise in the next decades.

A multitude of waterwise plants from around the globe have evolved in their

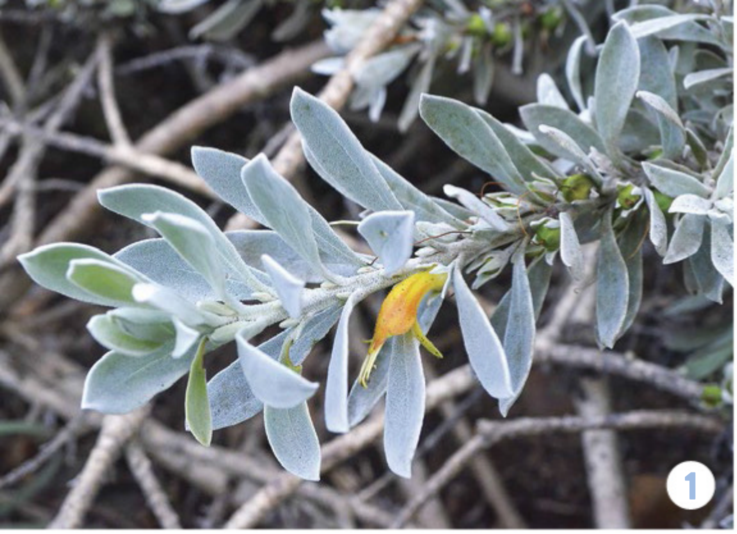
own ways to give those species the genetic potential to adapt to dry growing conditions. By selecting these plants, we are lessening the need for irrigation water while also reducing the considerable cost of creating the infrastructure – such as dams, water tanks, pipes and fittings – that is required to deliver water to plants.

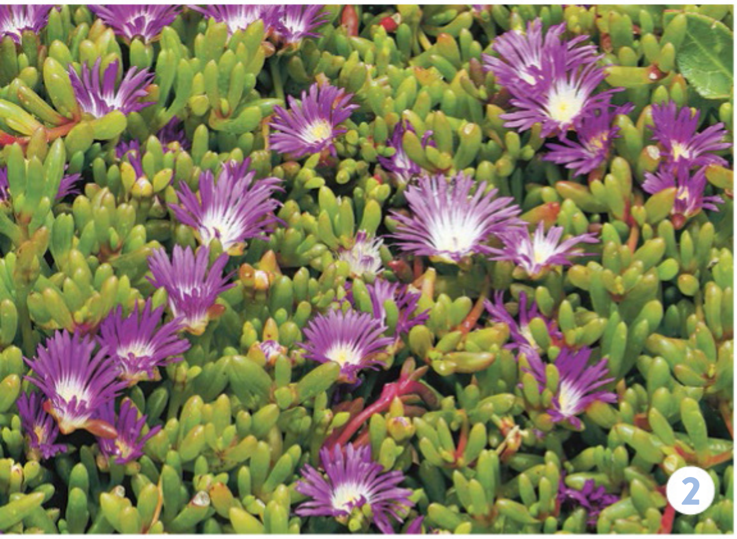
There are, of course, plants that are not so well adapted to dry conditions – chiefly, fruit and vegetable species, but also many stunning ornamental plants that we may want to grow for their aesthetic appeal in the garden or for their cut flowers and foliage. These are the high-performance plants that will never be able to reach their full potential if they are forced to grow without sufficient access to water. There are simple technologies, such as wicking beds, which allow these water-hungry plants to drink their fill without any of our precious high-quality irrigation water being lost to run-off and evaporation.

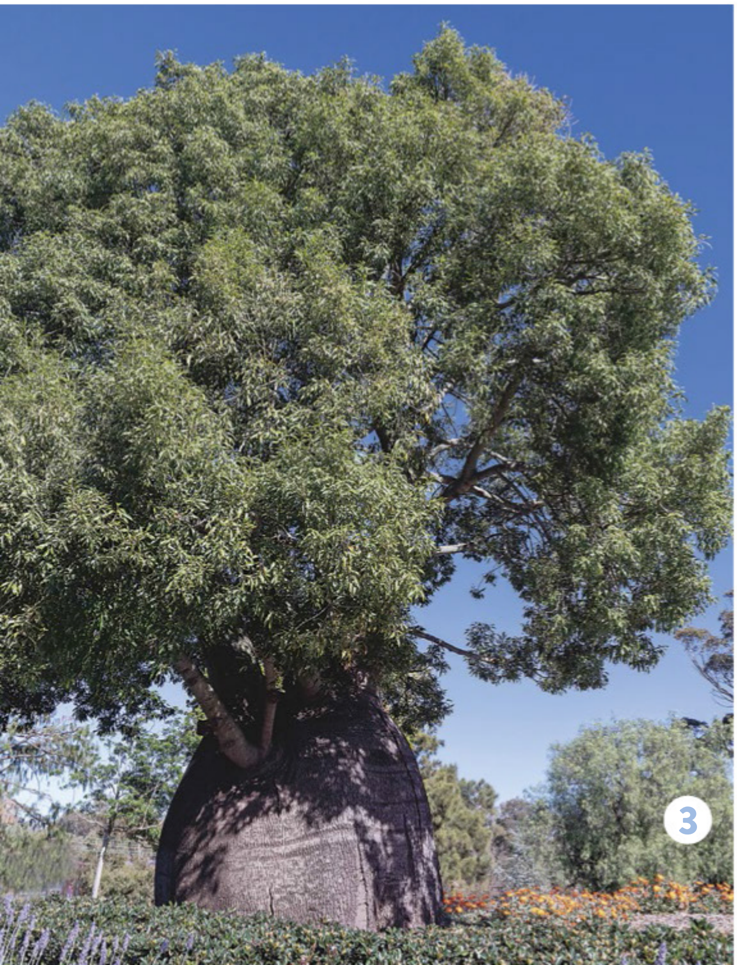
Farmers around the world are constantly exploring and implementing new methods and technologies designed to maximise water efficiency. It's possible to adapt these practices for home gardens of all sizes, too, from tiny inner-city balconies and suburban blocks to multi-hectare hobby farms and everything in between.

As well as new ideas, there are also time-honoured ways that farmers and gardeners have maximised their water efficiency over the thousands of years of human civilisation. For instance, building your soil's capacity for storing water can be as simple and cost effective as learning to turn all of your kitchen scraps into compost or worm castings that will act like a water-storing sponge in your soil or potting mix.

Any discussion around futureproofing also needs to take in water quality and how to maintain it at a standard suitable for the plants you are growing. The key is to catch and store as much water as possible from rainfall and/or town water supplies, saving anything that would otherwise go to waste as stormwater run-off. This will increase the amount of irrigation water that you'll have available for growing your own food and other plants that need a lot of water to not only survive, but also thrive. ►







Adaptable plants

In the future, we're likely to see temperature increases, rainfall fluctuations (flood and drought) and a surge in severe weather events, such as cyclones and hailstorms. We need to adapt our garden designs by selecting plants that will cope with these extremes. Here are some plants to consider for your garden.

Angus's top 6 NATIVE PLANTS TO GROW IN A WATER-SMART GARDEN

I've chosen six of my favourite plants that are foolproof and will adapt and thrive in gardens over a wide area of Australia, including bottlebrushes, which cope with prolonged periods of waterlogging and drought. All create great wildlife habitats.

1. *Eremophila glabra* 'Kalbarri Carpet'

The name *Eremophila* means 'desert loving' in a nod to the waterwise nature of this large group of Australian plants, which are just beginning their journey into cultivation. This cultivar is proving very adaptable to a wide variety of Australian conditions and performs well in unexpected places such as Melbourne and Hobart. It's a wonderful groundcover, with silvery-grey foliage and small yellow flowers most notable for their ability to attract birds such as spinebills that pollinate as they forage for nectar. Good drainage is the most important requirement for success.

2. Round-leaved pigface or rounded noon-flower (*Disphyma crassifolium*)

Australian gardeners are increasingly recognising the value of native succulents, not only for their ability to thrive on much less water, but also for their potential to be used as 'fire-safe' plants close to dwellings, where they better withstand ember attacks in a bushfire. *Disphyma crassifolium* is appearing in cultivation as a more subtle alternative to the more common pigface (*Carpobrotus* spp.). It thrives in harsh natural habitats such as coastal cliffs and inland semi-arid salt lakes, adapts to a wide range of soil types and climatic conditions, and strikes very easily from cuttings. Spectacular displays of deep pink flowers in spring are a highlight of this adaptable groundcover.

3. Queensland bottle tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*)

The distinctive shape of this species, perfectly described in its common name, lends itself to being a striking small feature tree in a wide variety of gardens from Brisbane to Melbourne – such is its adaptability. Coming from inland Queensland, it copes well with climatic extremes of heat and frost, and its attractive, glossy green, divided leaves are complemented by small bell-shaped flowers throughout spring and early summer. It's also one of

Australia's few deciduous trees, dropping its leaves in the wild in winter. It doesn't usually drop its foliage in cultivation, though, as the conditions rarely cause the tree enough stress for it to do so. It adapts well to a wide range of soils, provided it doesn't get waterlogged for lengthy periods.

4. Grey saltbush (*Atriplex cinerea*)

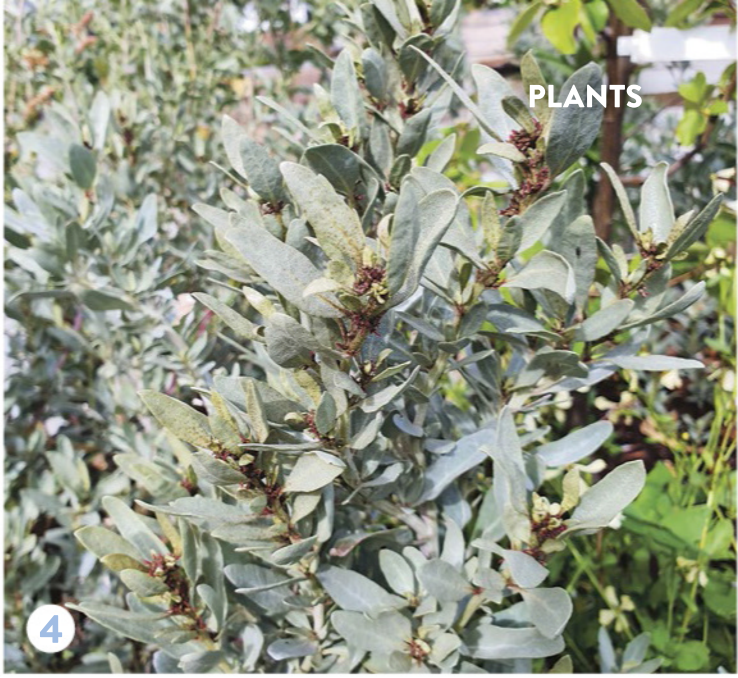
Australia has a number of very waterwise and versatile saltbushes that adapt well to gardens from Brisbane to Hobart and Perth. The silver foliage of *Atriplex cinerea* – its most prominent feature – makes it an attractive screening or hedge plant, and it's also edible. With reasonable drainage, it grows well in full sun to moderate shade, and it can be propagated easily from stem cuttings.

5. Leafless rock wattle (*Acacia aphylla*)

This fast-growing small shrub cuts a striking appearance in the garden, with its silvery leafless stems complemented by yellow spherical blooms in spring. It withstands moderate frost and high winds, and its flowers and foliage work well in a vase. It's also very easily propagated from seed.

6. *Callistemon* 'All Aglow'

Bottlebrushes and their close relatives the paperbarks (*Melaleuca* spp.) and the tea trees (*Leptospermum* spp.) are my go-to plants for futureproofing in areas where droughts inevitably seem to be followed by floods. These plant groups are able to withstand both climatic extremes and provide a huge range of form and diversity for the garden, particularly with many new cultivars becoming available. 'All Aglow' is an outstanding bottlebrush that grows into a large shrub but can also be clipped into a flowering hedge, with flushes of spectacular reddish-pink new growth. It attracts wildlife with its nectar-rich flowers, thrives in a variety of soil types and will withstand big frosts. These plants respond extremely well to feeding and pruning, which should be done after flowering has finished. ►



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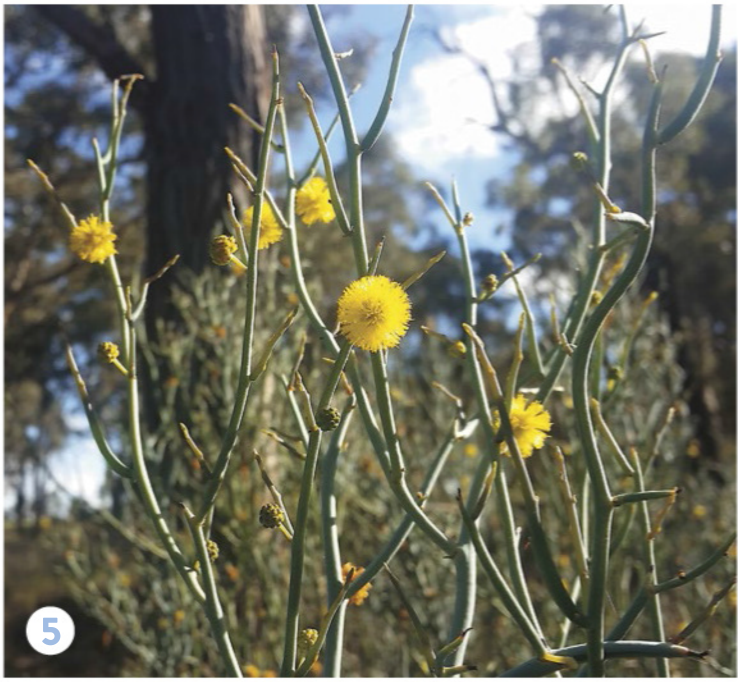

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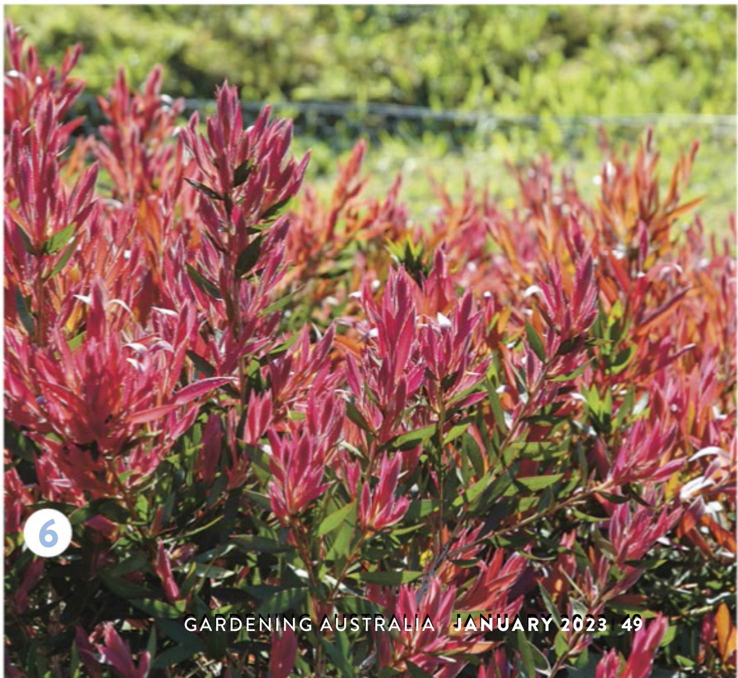

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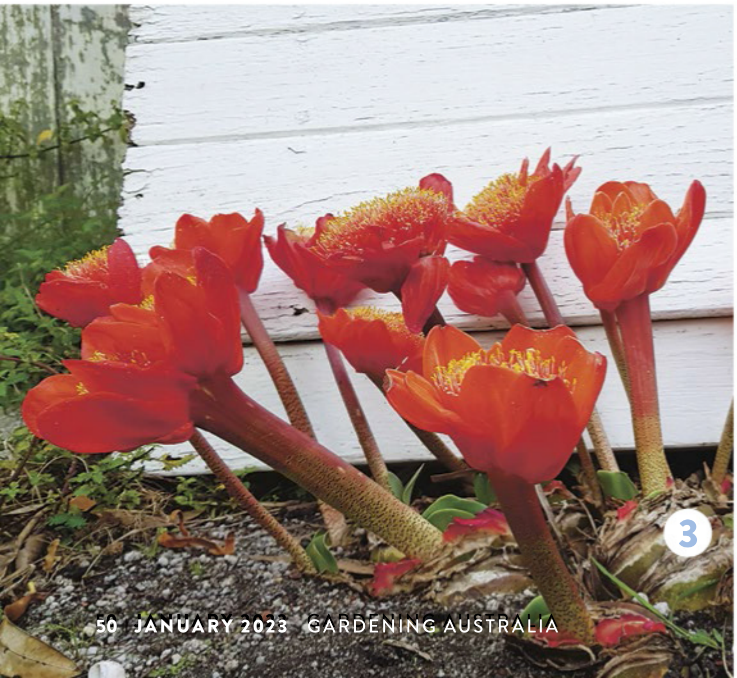


Emma's top 6 NON-NATIVE PLANTS

TO GROW IN A WATER-SMART GARDEN

When I was compiling a list of plants for the book, I chose a range of species for various climates and garden types. Some are both ornamental and edible, while others have scented leaves or flowers. Here are my six favourites.

1. Smoke bush (*Cotinus coggygria*)

Smoke bush is a great ornamental plant for a range of climates around Australia. It can grow anywhere from cold, frosty areas to northern humid regions, though the autumn foliage colours may not be as strong in warmer climates. Grown mainly for its colourful foliage and wispy flower heads that resemble clouds of smoke, this deciduous shrub is perfect for more spacious gardens and landscaping. The flowers appear from summer to autumn. It can handle both frosts and dry conditions, and is available in striking colours such as 'Royal Purple', which has deep purple leaves that turn orange and red in autumn.

2. Fig (*Ficus carica*)

Fig trees are a joy for their lush green leaves and delicious fruit. There are many varieties as well as native species to grow, some of which have been selected for their edible fruit. Most fig varieties are relatively small, making them suitable for gardens of different sizes. They grow well in containers, too. Figs do best in areas with a Mediterranean climate but can be grown in most parts of Australia. Some cultivars have been bred to perform well in cooler and wetter areas, so look for a variety that is suitable for your climate. Wet and humid summers can affect the fruit development.

3. Paintbrush lily (*Haemanthus coccineus*)

Very drought tolerant and highly ornamental, the paintbrush lily is a great bulb for water-smart gardens. It is dormant in summer and flowers in autumn, with crimson flowers borne on thick patterned stems. The flowering display is particularly striking on this plant because the flowers appear before the leaves, springing up from the bare earth. Native to South Africa, it's best grown in a raised bed or container, as it needs good drainage and doesn't like wet feet. The leaves are also quite ornamental – they are large and fleshy and give the plant its other common name of ox tongue. This plant is best grown in the warmer parts of Australia.

4. Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*)

Pomegranates are low-maintenance plants, and with a bit of care, they produce lovely edible fruits. They are drought tolerant, but for good growth and fruit production they need consistent water in spring and during very dry periods. They are large deciduous shrubs to small trees, with a number

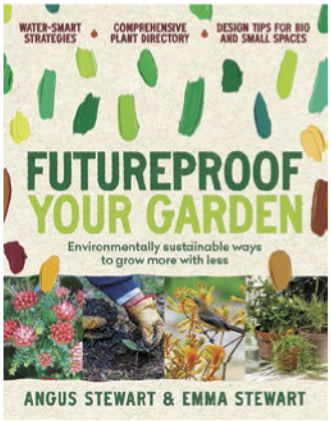
of dwarf or smaller varieties suitable for gardens with less space. Many can be pruned to 2m and grown in containers, so they are great for courtyards and small sunny spaces. Pomegranates do best in areas with hot, dry climates, but there are cultivars available for different conditions.

5. Shrubby germander (*Teucrium fruticans*)

This is an evergreen shrub in the same family as mint. It has soft green aromatic leaves and small blue-purple flowers in summer. Ideal for coastal gardens, it needs good drainage but can withstand a range of soil types, including poor soils. High moisture and humidity can cause fungal problems for this plant. Shrubby germander is a low-maintenance plant that's great for landscaping, as it doesn't need much water once established. It can also be grown in inland areas of Australia, as it can handle light frosts as well as dry heat.

6. Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)

A well-known and very tough plant, thyme is an excellent waterwise herb for any type of garden. It grows as a spreading groundcover so can be used to create a fragrant carpet in hot, dry areas of the garden. It's also great to grow as a border or spilling down over the sides of a container. Thyme works well in mixed plantings, such as a pot of edible herbs that all enjoy similar conditions, including rosemary and bay leaf. The tiny purple or pink flowers appear in summer and are attractive to insects. Propagate your thyme from cuttings every few years, as it can be a short-lived plant.



WATER-SMART STRATEGIES • COMPREHENSIVE PLANT DIRECTORY • DESIGN TIPS FOR BIG AND SMALL SPACES

FUTUREPROOF YOUR GARDEN

Environmentally sustainable ways to grow more with less

ANGUS STEWART & EMMA STEWART

This is an edited extract of images and text from *Futureproof Your Garden* by Angus Stewart and Emma Stewart, with photography by Brent Wilson, Kathrin Seels and Angus Stewart, $45, Murdoch Books.

SCENTS & sensibility

Some perfumes in the garden have an instant calming and cooling effect, writes **JACKIE FRENCH**

No such thing as a cool or warm scent, you say? Then why do we float slices of lemon and lime or sprigs of mint in jugs of water, or add cucumber slices or cucumber-scented borage flowers to our iced drinks? Just as winter has its warm scents – the cloves, ginger, nutmeg and cinnamon of mulled wine or winter puddings – there are perfumes that make us feel cool.

Mint is number one here. In fact, the menthol in mint tricks the nerve cells in your tongue into thinking they've tasted something cold. As far as I know, no one has tested the effect of mint on the nerves in the rest of the body, but just rolling on a bed of tiny-leafed, fragrant Corsican mint makes me feel cooler too. It's also fun.

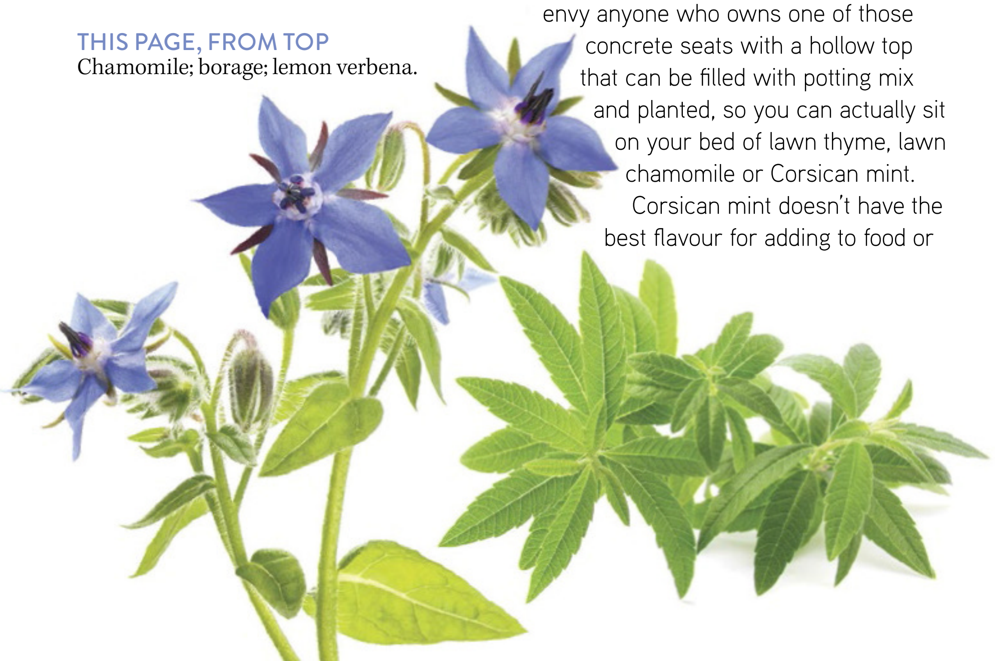
My chief 'one of these days' projects is to buy two tall, wide-mouthed terracotta bowls, then fill them with good potting mix and plant Corsican mint, totally filling the pots so that as the mint grows, it dangles down, like water flowing from a bowl. I'll be able to brush my hands against the leaves every time I pass. I also deeply envy anyone who owns one of those concrete seats with a hollow top that can be filled with potting mix and planted, so you can actually sit on your bed of lawn thyme, lawn chamomile or Corsican mint.

Corsican mint doesn't have the best flavour for adding to food or drinks (unlike other mints, which are perfect for adding to fruit salads or yoghurt, or dishes like tabouli), but it's the best for sitting on. Like all mints, it needs moist soil, so water often and make sure it gets at least four hours of sunlight a day.

Some years I grow borage just for its cucumber scent, but salad burnet has a far more pronounced cucumber perfume and flavour – even better than cucumbers themselves. It's a delight to smell in the garden, and it's just as good chopped finely and added to either the salad bowl or salad sandwiches.

Lemon scents don't actually cool you, but they are so associated with cool drinks that whenever I smell them, I find that suddenly the world no longer seems so blazing. Curiously, the strongest lemon fragrances in your garden may not come

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP
Chamomile; borage; lemon verbena.



CLASSIC MINT JULEP

The classic mint julep cocktail is made in a tall glass or small metal tankard, so the warmth of your hands doesn't heat up the contents.

1 **PLACE** six mint leaves and 1 tbsp of white sugar at the base of the glass or tankard.

2 **USE** a wooden pestle, a muddler, or the handle of a wooden spoon to crush the sugar and mint together.

3 **ADD** 1 tbsp of bourbon whisky (alternatively, skip the bourbon and add an orange slice, skin on, instead of the alcohol). Fill the glass with crushed ice – the finer the better, to dilute the sugar and bourbon.

4 **SIP** slowly, as the ice melts.

from lemons, but from brushing against a clump of lemongrass, or a bush of lemon verbena or lemon balm. Lemongrass and lemon verbena are possibly even more lemon scented than actual lemons. We have several lemon trees of various varieties, but none has the fragrance of the giant lemon verbena bush growing next to the steps to our washing line. (Washing dried on the line near a lemon verbena bush and 'Buff Beauty' and 'Papa Meilland' roses has a fragrance you'll never find in clothes from a dryer.)

Lemon balm has a slight turpentine flavour, but its scent is wonderful in the garden. I grow it outside my vegetable garden, so it brushes against my jeans whenever I pass it. If you want to get the strongest scents of mint or lemon or cucumber borage, grow them by a path, door or gateway, where you'll brush against them often, releasing their aroma. They'll still faintly perfume the air on hot days when the heat draws out the perfumed oils, but the scent lingering on your legs, hands or clothes is one of the treats of summer.

Lemon verbena bushes lose their leaves in winter, and the new leaves arrive with summer, just in time to poke a sprig or two into a jug of water for a gloriously cool tang. Add a few mint leaves, too – culinary mint if you must (the kind you use for mint sauce), but black peppermint (*Mentha* x *piperita* var. *vulgaris*) is the most delicious one for drinking or adding to fruit salads.

A jug of iced water with a branch of lemon verbena and at least a dozen mint leaves, slightly crushed by your fingers before you add them, is a delight. Just add ice cubes. I sometimes add a leaf of mint or lemon verbena to the ice trays before I freeze them for an even more pervasive scent as the cubes melt in your glass.

MAIN & ABOVE
Fill a jug of iced water with lemon slices and lemon verbena for a refreshing drink; salad burnet smells and tastes like cucumber.

In truth, my favourite summer scent is that of freshly mown grass, watered at dusk, so you can smell the hot soil cooling down. Even better, stand under the hose while you're watering, so you can cool down too, and inhale the scents of summer. GA

PHOTOS ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/FRIEDRICH STRAUSS

SUMMER Spruce-up

’Tis the season for outdoor living and entertaining. So, how’s your garden looking? **ROGER FOX** offers 10 quick fixes to help put the ‘great’ into your great outdoors

1 COLOUR IN

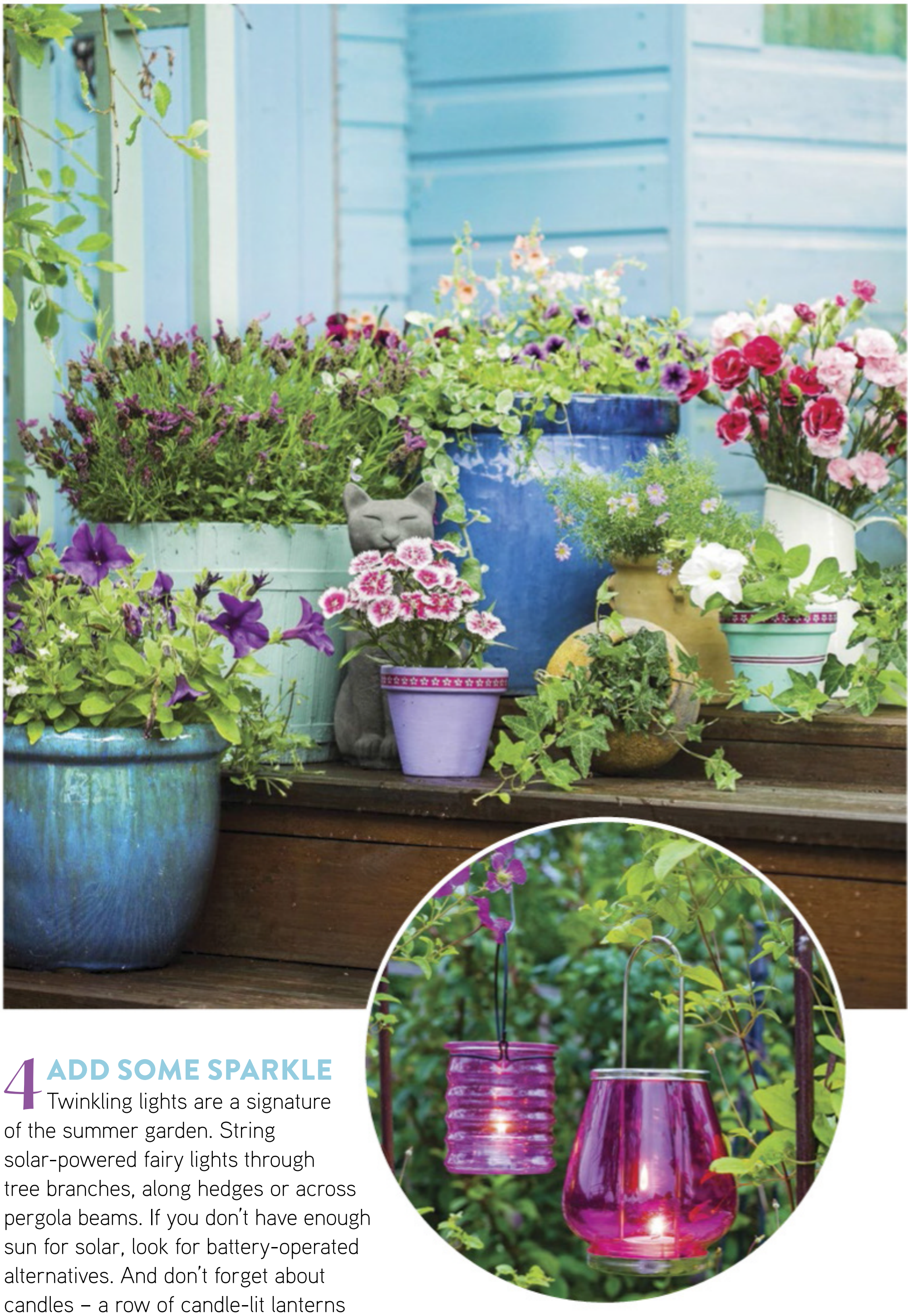
Some of the best ingredients for a summer garden spruce-up are as close as your local nursery. Potted colour and flowering shrubs are a saviour for the time-poor garden fixer, and when you get them home, you can use the cheat's approach to potting them up – just slip the plastic containers inside decorative pots, troughs or window boxes for instant effect. They'll live happily like this for many weeks, until you get time to do some serious gardening.

2 CONTAINED EXCITEMENT

Pots are the most versatile decorative element in the garden. Invest in a collection of new containers, all in similar colours, then plant them up with flowers and foliage in contrasting shades. Cluster pots together for impact – three different sizes of the same style works beautifully. And remember: dressing up the garden isn't all about the new. Freshen up your existing container plants so they put their best face forward. Trim and tidy potted shrubs, deadhead annuals and perennials, and give everything a dose of liquid fertiliser for an extra boost.

3 SHAPE UP

Grab the secateurs and hedge shears, and tidy up shrubs, hedges and climbers that have put on exuberant spring growth. Cut back branches impeding pathways or intruding at head height, which can be a real nuisance. Remove weeds and spread a fresh layer of mulch on garden beds to create a neat and ordered landscape. Give the lawn a quick green-up by applying a hose-on lawn food product a week or two ahead of any outdoor events. And just ahead of time, mow and edge lawns (or get out the rake if you only need to remove leaf litter).



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE
Your outdoor space can be a haven to both entertain and relax in; fill pots with colourful and scented flowers, and arrange in clusters to create a sense of abundance; hanging tea light holders add warmth and atmosphere.

4 ADD SOME SPARKLE

Twinkling lights are a signature of the summer garden. String solar-powered fairy lights through tree branches, along hedges or across pergola beams. If you don't have enough sun for solar, look for battery-operated alternatives. And don't forget about candles – a row of candle-lit lanterns hanging from tree branches or lining a pathway is simple style at its best (just make sure you keep an eye on them!).

5 TURN UP THE PRESSURE

For a quick fix, high-pressure water cleaning should be one of the top jobs on your list. Outdoor paving, garden edging, timber decks and a whole range of other surfaces can be cleaned and refreshed quickly, leaving them looking as good as new. You can hire a high-pressure cleaner for a few hours, or maybe even purchase one of the lightweight electric models, so you always have it on hand. ▶

PHOTOS PELARGONIUM FOR EUROPE, SHUTTERSTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/JULIETTE WADE

6 MAKE IT GLOW

There's something about the glowing ambience of a fire pit that makes it an instant people magnet. So if you have an open entertaining space – either a lawn or paved area – consider adding one to create a central feature. There's a wide range of off-the-shelf fire pits available these days, and you can even buy teepee-frame inserts to support the logs for hassle-free burning.

7 GET SCENTUAL

A lovely feature of the summer garden is the mix of scents permeating the air. While you can't grow a magnolia tree overnight, there are a few more compact options that you can introduce to your garden for a blast of instant fragrance. Gorgeous gardenias and summer-flowering liliums both exude a heady scent, and both can be bought in full bloom at this time of year. Others to consider include native jasmine, English lavender and frangipani.

8 TAKE A SEAT

Your outdoor furniture has many months of use ahead of it, so it's worth giving it a clean-up now. For metal and plastic pieces, wash with warm water and a splash of detergent, then hose off. For tired timber settings, use a deck cleaning solution first, followed by two coats of oil or varnish (check out the spray-on products to really speed things up). Or go down the painted furniture path instead, and reinvent a garden bench or table in a bright new colour.

9 MAKE A SPLASH

A simple water feature is a great way to infuse your garden with atmosphere, and it's easier to create than you might think. Take a broad shallow bowl (with drainage hole sealed), spread out a layer of pebbles, then fill with water and float some summer flowers on top – it's your new outdoor float bowl. To create a more permanent feature, select a larger, deeper container, add a couple of water plants and include a few small fish to graze on mosquito larvae.

10 CHILL TIME

Remember that your summer garden is for relaxing just as much as it is for entertaining, so add a few 'me spots' where you can retreat, relax and breathe it all in. String up a hammock from a sturdy tree branch or verandah beam; buy a luxurious day bed to add resort vibes; or go mid-century modern with a hanging egg chair. If you're lacking the perfect shaded corner, you could try installing a shade sail – they provide an instant 'verandah' when you need it. GA

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
Add instant fragrance to your backyard with a frangipani or two; a fire pit makes a great destination for an outdoor entertaining area; make your own water feature with an attractive wide pot and a few water plants.

PHOTOS ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS, GAP PHOTOS/ANNAICK GUITTENY

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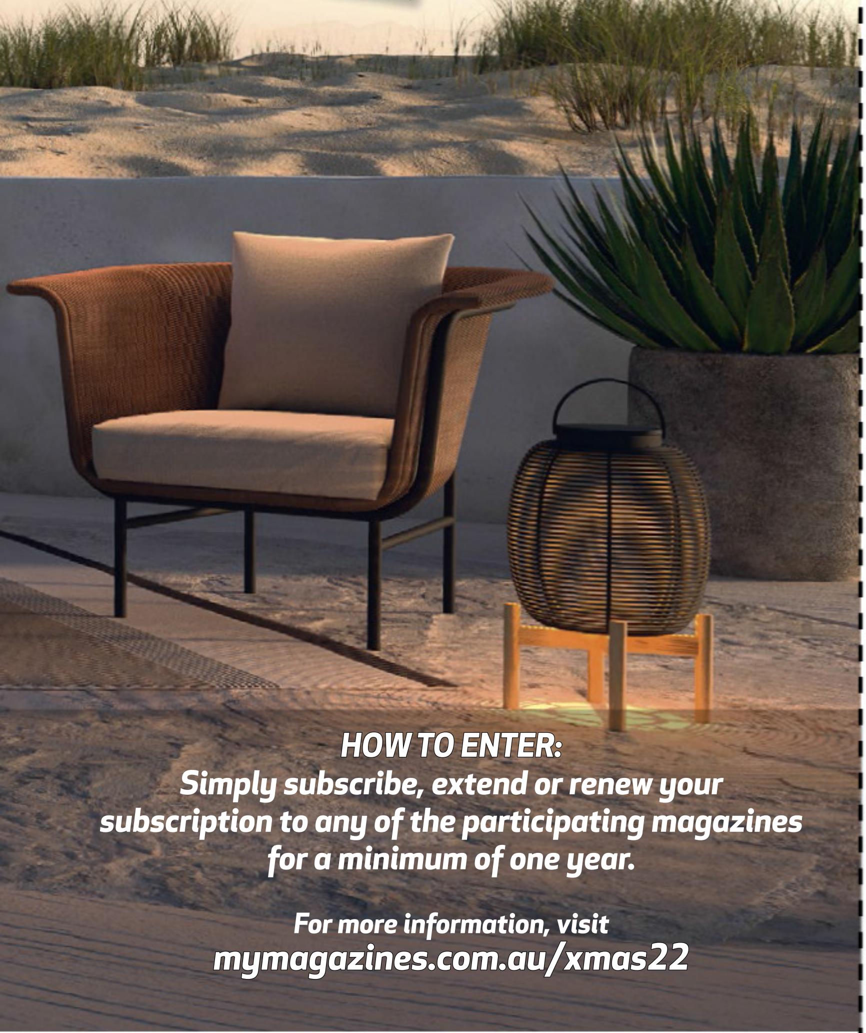

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IN THE PATCH

with **PHIL DUDMAN**

PHOTO ANNA HUTCHCROFT

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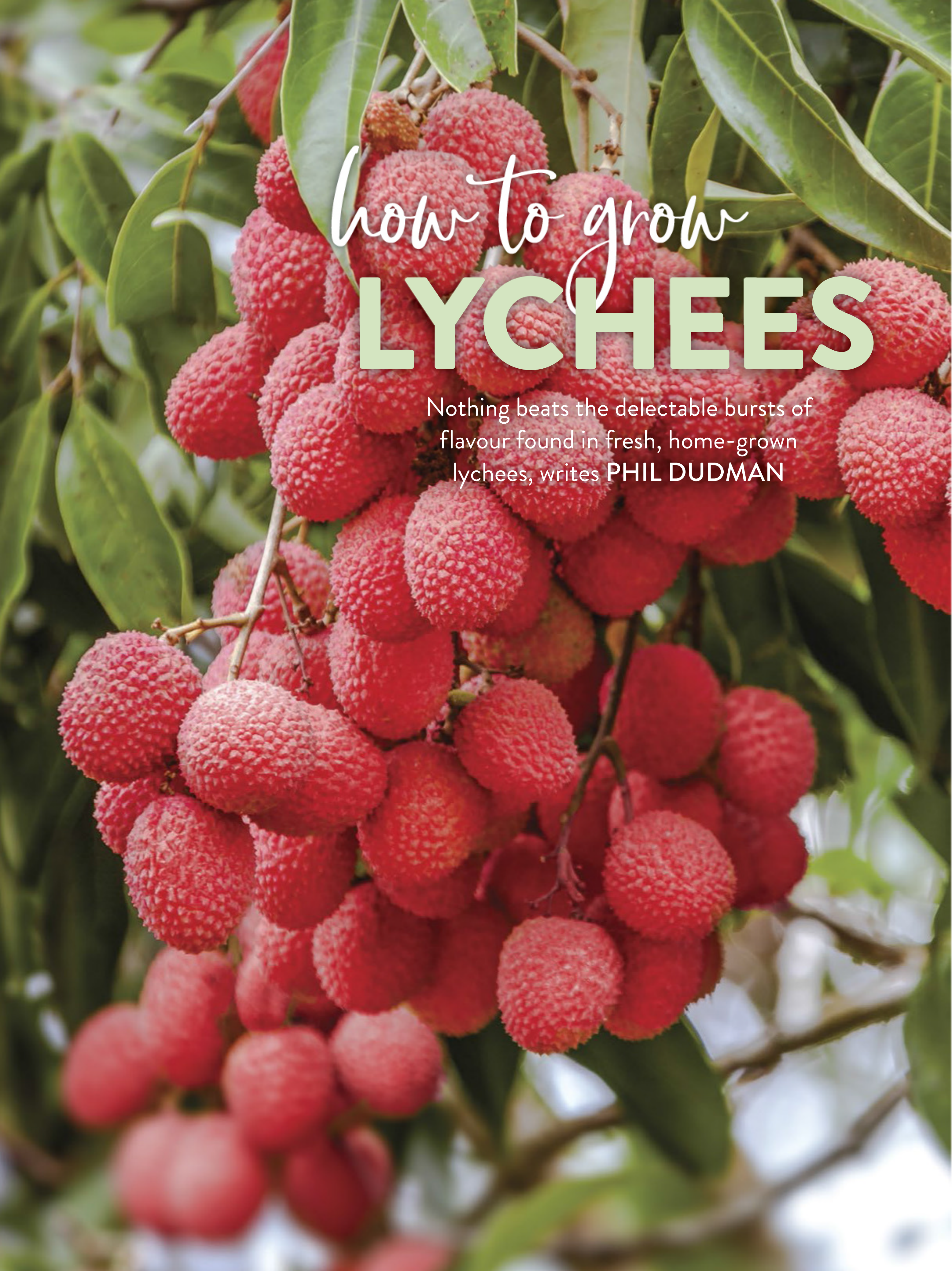


how to grow
LYCHEES

Nothing beats the delectable bursts of flavour found in fresh, home-grown lychees, writes **PHIL DUDMAN**

Words cannot describe the flavour and texture of a fresh lychee, plucked straight from a tree and devoured immediately, but I'll give it a try: Sweetly aromatic, with a hint of floral notes… a cross between a strawberry and a watermelon, with grape-like flesh… nah, can't do it. One thing's for sure, though, the eating experience is unforgettable. However, you *can* forget those nasty tinned lychees – they're sickly sweet and disgusting – and don't bother with the loose supermarket fruit that have been sitting in the fridge for a week, either. With lychees, it's all about the freshness (okay, I think I've made my point).

A lychee tree is a splendid feature in the garden. It forms a dense, rounded canopy of attractive, glossy foliage, and is covered in bunches of small, oval-shaped pinkish-red fruit from late spring to early autumn (depending on the variety). Being evergreen and compact, it makes a good screen or shade tree, and it can be kept small and productive with annual pruning.

growing tips

Native to southern China, lychees grow best in subtropical and tropical areas, where summers are hot and humid, and winters cool and dry. You can grow them in warm temperate areas, too, but you need to create a cosy microclimate by planting in front of a north-facing wall.

They like plenty of sun but will not tolerate strong winds, which can cause leaf burn and limb breakage, so be sure to provide your tree with the protection of a building, fence or windbreak.

You only need to grow one lychee tree because they're self-pollinating, producing both male and female flowers on the same plant. Most soil types will support them if they are well drained. They prefer a deep topsoil, so create a planting mound that's at least 30cm deep and 1.5m wide, and incorporate some compost.

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE
Lychee fruit forms at the tips of the branches; the trees can be kept compact; fresh is best.

Your new tree won't need staking, but it will appreciate some additional protection for the first year or two to reduce the risk of sun scorch and wind damage. Knock in three stakes around the plant and wrap a single layer of shadecloth around it.

Keep the soil moist until the tree is established. After that, it can pretty much survive on natural rainfall, but may need a deep drink in extended dry periods and some water during fruit set. Give trees a feed in spring and summer with organic pellets, and keep the root zone mulched with straw or woodchip.

fruiting & pruning

Lychee trees can be slow to get started. Even cloned trees can take 3–4 years to set their first fruit, but by year seven or eight, you should start enjoying bumper crops. A dry spring, when trees are in bloom, is ►

5 top picks

Choose varieties that fruit early, in the middle of the season, and late to extend your lychee harvest.

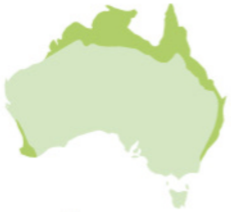
- **Kwai Mai Pink** Popular, reliable cropper. Good in southern areas. Mid season (Dec to Feb).
- **Tai So** Similar qualities to Kwai Mai Pink. Early season (Nov to Jan).
- **Kaimana** Very sweet large fruit produced on a medium-sized tree. Mid season (Dec to Jan).
- **Wai Chee** Heavy cropper, compact canopy. Late season (Feb-Apr).
- **Salathiel** Very sweet with small seeds. Late season (Jan to Mar).

at a glance

common name
lychee

botanic name
Litchi chinensis

↑ 2–5m ↔ 2–5m
☀ full sun
✿ spring to summer
● late spring to early autumn



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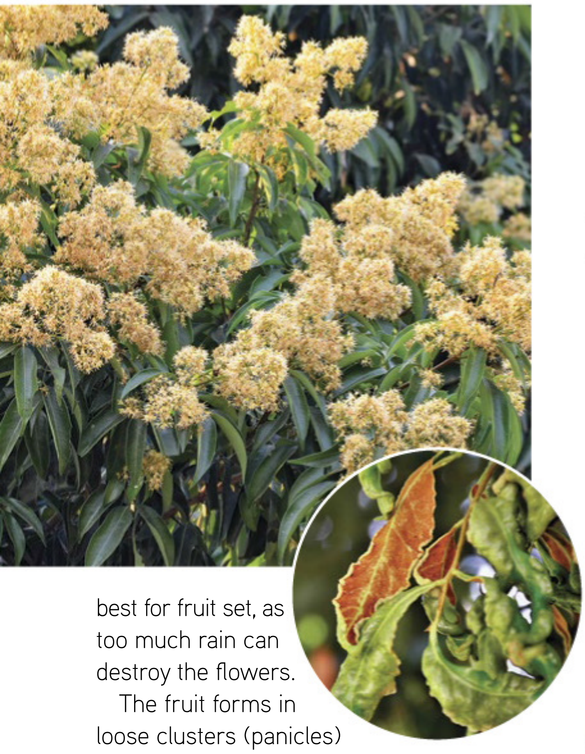


best for fruit set, as too much rain can destroy the flowers.

The fruit forms in loose clusters (panicles) at the tips of the branches. Fruit is ripe when it turns pinkish-red and is firm and springy when squeezed. You can pick the fruit individually, but it's best to use secateurs to cut off the entire panicle with a 20cm length of stem attached.

This also makes a good start to pruning, which should be done each year straight after harvesting to manage the tree's size. Prune lightly, shaping the canopy narrower at the top to allow sunlight to reach the lower branches. If you need to reduce the height of an oversized tree, start by taking out some tall, central, upward-growing branches to let sunlight into the canopy.

pest control

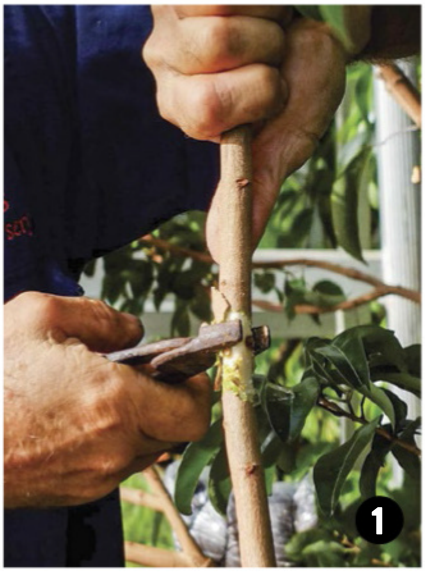
Lorikeets and flying foxes often have their eyes on the prize, so cover your lychee trees with wildlife-friendly netting to keep them out. If you're in a fruit fly area, use a fine-weave pest-exclusion net. Erinose mite, a tiny sap-sucking insect, causes blistering on leaves and a reddish-brown velvety growth on the undersides. Spray with wettable sulfur just as a new flush of leaves is initiated. GA

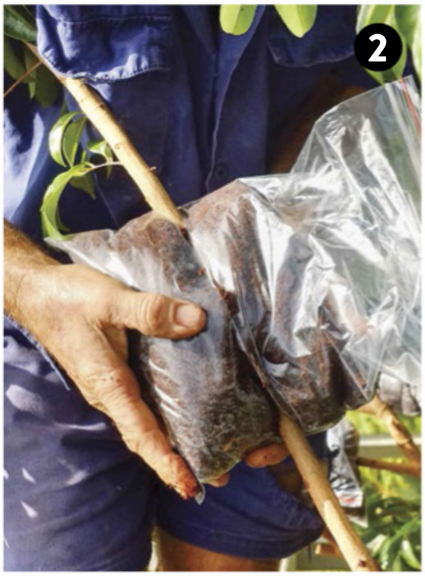
ABOVE & INSET
A lychee tree in full flower; leaf deformity caused by an infestation of erinose mite.

STEP-BY-STEP

PROPAGATE A LYCHEE

Marcotting is the best propagation method for lychees, and most lychee trees in nurseries have been grown this way. Also known as air layering, it's like taking a giant cutting, only it remains attached to the mother plant. It sounds like high-end horticulture, but it's actually fun and easy to do. Just learn the basic technique and you'll be good to go.

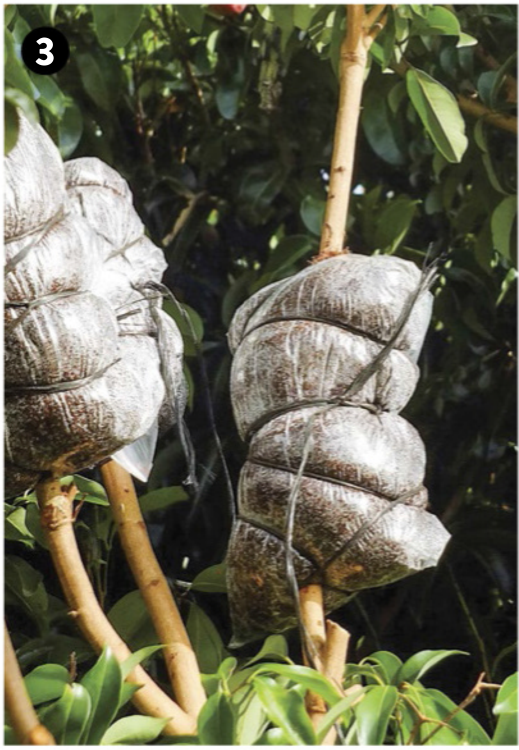




1 **SELECT** a branch that's about 2–3cm in diameter and use a knife or a pair of pliers to ringbark a section 2–3cm long. It's important to remove all of the green cambium layer to expose the inner wood, otherwise the bark may re-form.

2 **FILL** a small plastic bag with moist coir peat, make a slit in the centre and wrap it around the wounded area.

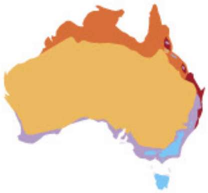
3 **TIE** cord around the bag to secure it firmly. Roots will grow in the bag, and in a few months you will see them through the plastic. When a well-established root system is formed, cut your new plant off the tree and pot it up, being very careful not to disturb the roots.



PHOTOS ISTOCK, PHIL DUDMAN

SOW & PLANT NOW

asian greens				●	●
basil	●	●	●	●	●
beans (french, climbing)			●	●	
beans (snake)	●	●	●	●	
beetroot				●	●
broccoli					●
brussels sprouts				●	●
cabbage				●	●
capsicum/chilli	●	●	●	●	
carrot				●	●
cauliflower		●		●	●
chives				●	●
cucumber	●	●	●	●	
eggplant	●	●	●	●	
ginger	●	●	●	●	
kale				●	●
kohlrabi				●	●
leek			●	●	●
lettuce		●	●	●	●
melon		●	●	●	
okra	●	●	●	●	
parsnip				●	●
pumpkin		●	●	●	●
radish		●	●	●	●
silverbeet				●	●
spring onion				●	●
swede				●	●
sweetcorn	●	●	●	●	
sweet potato	●				
tomato	●	●	●	●	
turnip				●	●
zucchini/squash		●	●	●	●



KEY

tropical	●
subtropical	●
arid/semi-arid	●
warm temperate	●
cold temperate	●

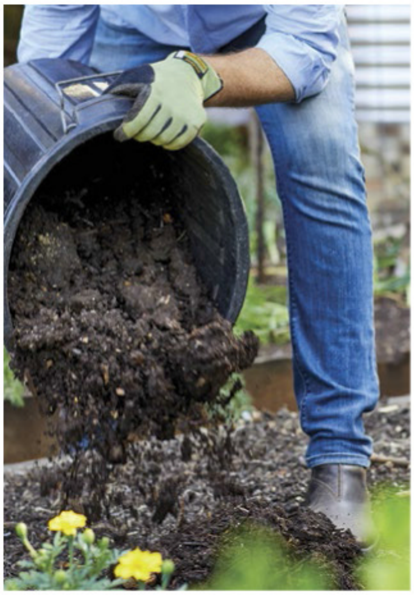
Whether you have 15 minutes or an hour to spare, you can still achieve good things in your productive garden. Here are a few suggestions...

WATER AND FEED CELERY Celery demands a lot of water. If the soil is parched, celery stalks become dry and fibrous and not worth eating, but if it's kept consistently moist, the stalks are crisp and delicious, and better than any celery you've eaten before. Check on your plants every couple of days and give the soil around the roots a good soaking if needed. Also, treat them to some liquid fertiliser (a blend of seaweed extract and fish emulsion is good) every 10 days or so to encourage rapid healthy growth.

REMOVE STRAWBERRY RUNNERS Strawberry plants put on a lot of runners towards the end of their fruiting season. These will quickly take over if you let them, putting down roots wherever they touch the ground. Chop them off as they appear, or wait for them to put on a few leaves and then pot them up, ready to plant out next season. If you like, plant the runners in pots while they're still attached to the mother plant. This avoids transplant shock and guarantees success. Just make sure their crowns remain above the surface of the mix so they don't rot.

PRUNE PEACHES AND NECTARINES These are the easiest of all stone fruit to prune, and the most important pruning is done in summer. As soon as you've finished harvesting the fruit, sharpen and sterilise your pruning tools, then remove any dead or diseased wood and prune out the growth that's crossing the centre of the tree to keep the canopy open. Cut all the remaining stems back to the main branches, leaving one or two buds at the base. The tree will quickly burst into a flush of new growth, which will produce flowers and fruit next season.

TEXT PHIL DUDMAN **PHOTOS** ISTOCK



cool ways *with* COMPOST

There are many more ways to make use of your homemade compost than simply digging it into the soil. **PHIL DUDMAN** shares five handy ideas

1 USE IT AS MULCH

You can't get a better mulch for your patch than compost. Simply spread a 3–5cm layer over the surface of your beds (no need to dig it in) and plant into that. It's nice and easy to work with and you don't need to add any other kind of mulch. Top it up every 6–12 months.

2 ADD IT TO POTTING MIX

If you grow vegies in pots, you can use compost to boost a regular potting mix with microbial life. Add one part compost to five parts premium potting mix and mix well.

3 MAKE SEED-RAISING MIX

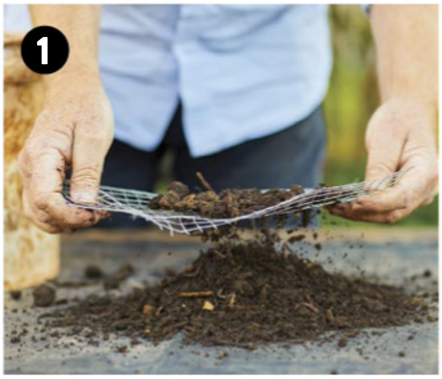
With a little sieving and a few additives, homemade compost can be turned into a useful seed-raising mix.

1 CREATE a makeshift screen with a piece of galvanised wire mesh. Then pile on some compost and shake it around to separate the fine material from the chunky. Keep the finer stuff, and remove any woody bits.

2 ADD some moistened coir peat and coarse river sand. Aim for a blend of approximately two parts sieved compost, two parts coir peat and one part sand.

3 MIX until it's all evenly combined.

4 FILL up some punnets with the mix, add enough water to make it moist, and you're ready to sow seed.



PHOTOS ANNA HUTCHCROFT, ISTOCK, PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATSKY

4 MAKE LIQUID SOIL CONDITIONER

Commonly called compost tea, this is a great way to make the microbes in your compost go further. This rough-and-ready method is the simplest way to make it.

1 **GRAB** a large tub and tip in one part compost to 10 parts rainwater. If you don't have rainwater, use tap water that has been sitting out for 12 hours or so, so that the chlorine (which will kill the good microorganisms) has dissipated.

2 **STIR** the mix with a stick. You can use it all straightaway or leave it to brew for a week or so. Just make sure you stir and oxygenate it regularly, at least three times a day. The good microbes depend on it.

3 **FILTER** the brew. You could do this by putting a piece of shadecloth over a bucket to separate the solids as you tip the liquid in. Then apply it to the soil with a bucket or a watering can with the rose removed (to stop it getting clogged with fine particles).

5 TOP-DRESS YOUR LAWN

If your lawn is looking lifeless and undernourished, try topping it with a 0.5–1cm layer of compost. This will get the worms and microbes working, helping to aerate and build better soil structure, while improving the overall health of the turf.

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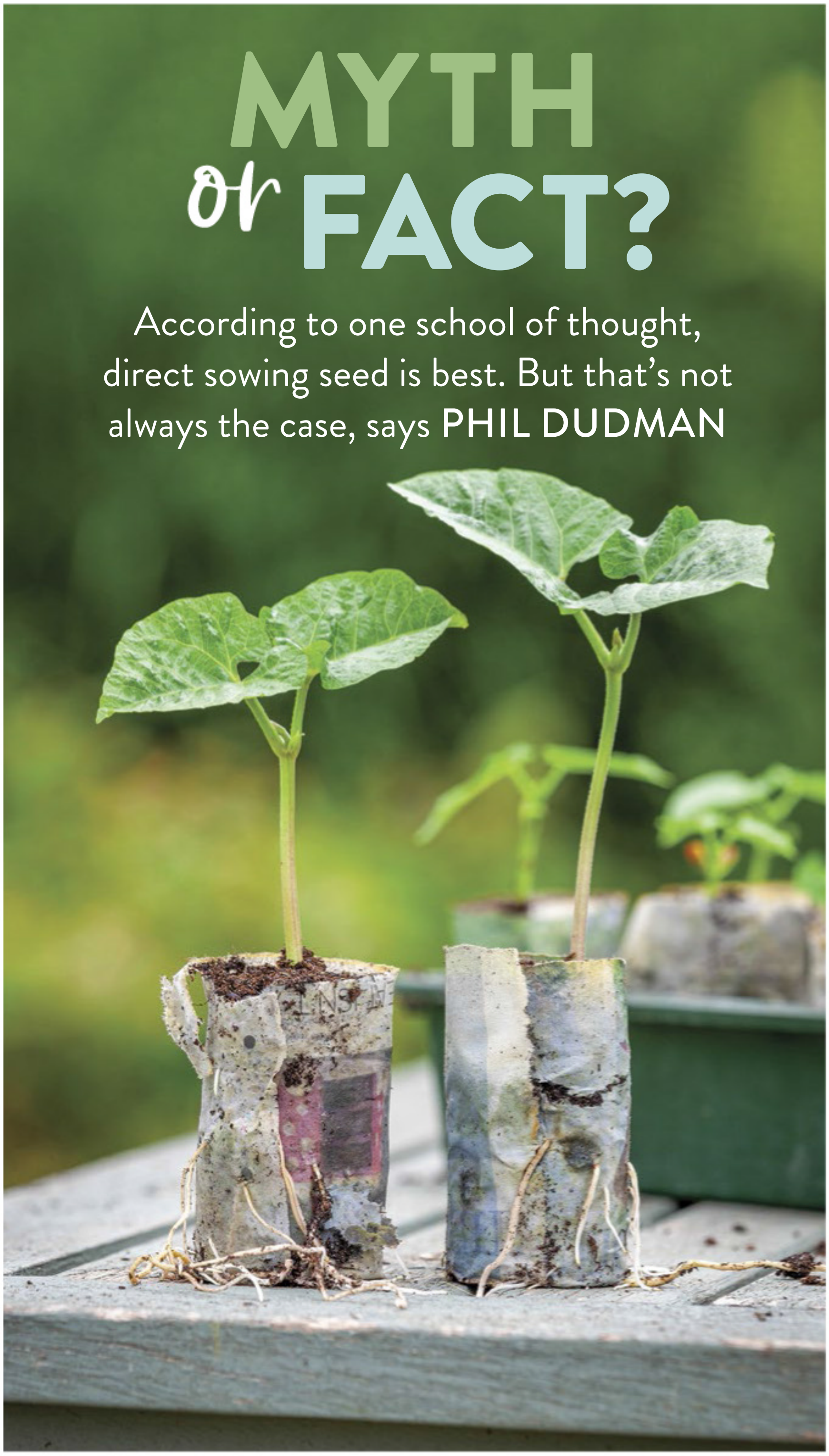


MYTH *or* FACT?

According to one school of thought, direct sowing seed is best. But that's not always the case, says **PHIL DUDMAN**

PHOTO GAP PHOTOS/JONATHAN BUCKLEY

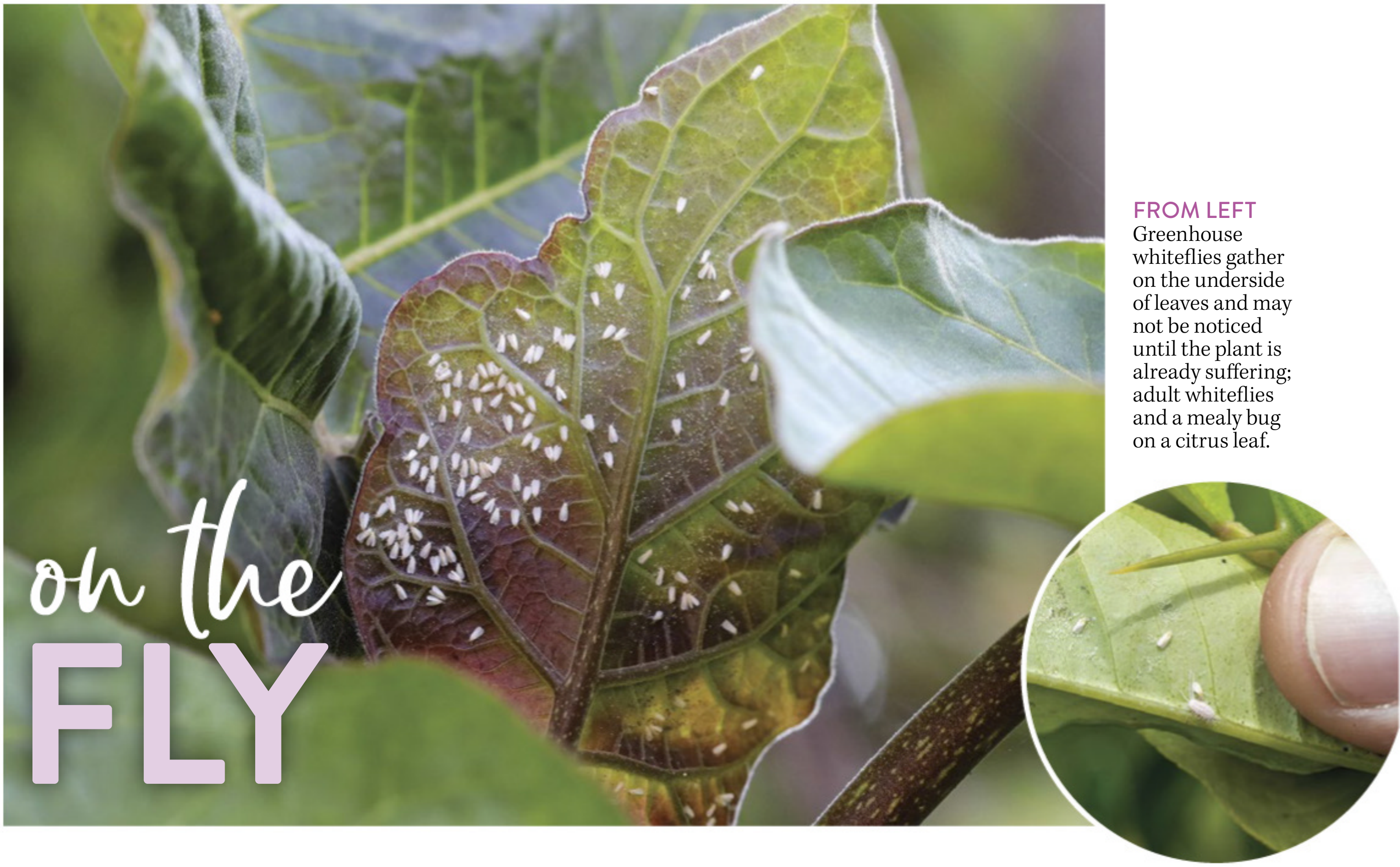
Direct sowing refers to the planting of seeds straight into the ground, rather than starting them in punnets or pots. A lot of advice suggests that this is a better way to go. The idea behind this is that plants grow better when sown directly because you avoid transplant shock. It's particularly recommended for sowing root vegetables, which are said to suffer the greatest setback when transplanted.

In the case of carrots and parsnips, I agree wholeheartedly – any disturbance to their taproots leads to unwanted forking. But as for beets, radishes, turnips, onions and other 'must-direct-sow' vegies, such as beans, spinach, melons, zucchini and peas, I beg to differ. In fact, I've found that starting these vegie seeds in punnets leads to a higher rate of germination and much greater returns from your patch in general.

The main reason is the ability to control conditions. Out in the patch, when things get too wet, dry, hot or cold, seeds and seedlings are prone to failing. Then there are the pests – slugs, snails, cutworms and birds – that are standing by to destroy the young plants. When you start seeds in punnets, it's easier to protect them and provide them with the conditions they need for success. If the weather turns bad, you can move them, and by the time they go into the ground, the seedlings are often 2–3 weeks old and well established.

This means you save precious time, too, because you don't have to wait for a space to become available in the patch to sow your seed – you already have seedlings ready to go. You also don't waste time having to re-sow if something fails. All of this leads to higher returns from your patch.

So, what about the issue of root disturbance when transplanting? The best way to avoid this is to raise seedlings in multicell punnets. That way, instead of you having to separate seedlings from one another, they are each planted out as a plug with their own established root system.



on the FLY

FROM LEFT Greenhouse whiteflies gather on the underside of leaves and may not be noticed until the plant is already suffering; adult whiteflies and a mealy bug on a citrus leaf.

Early detection and decisive action is the best defence against whitefly

If you've ever brushed past a bunch of plants in your patch and noticed a cloud of tiny white insects appear out of the blue, it's likely you have a growing population of whitefly. You don't normally notice them because they are mostly hidden under the leaves, where they feed and breed at their leisure.

Whiteflies are not actually flies; they're more closely related to aphids and scale. Just like their cousins, these pests are sap-sucking insects that cause a lot of damage to their hosts. When plants are under attack, they look limp or stunted as they struggle to maintain optimum health and vitality. You may detect other telltale signs on affected plants, such as leaf mottling or sooty mould, which grows on the honeydew that the pests produce.

There are many types of whitefly, but the one you will most commonly see in the patch is the greenhouse whitefly (*Trialeurodes vaporariorum*). It can affect a range of edible plants, including potato, tomato, eggplant, capsicum, cucumber, zucchini, cabbage, lettuce and beans.

Check under leaves to detect and control the pest before a major outbreak occurs. Adults look like tiny white moths and are covered in a powdery wax. Look for their nymphs, too – pale green or translucent scale-like insects, which crawl in their early stage before settling in to fatten up and evolve into a fully fledged flying adult.

For simple and gentle control, apply a horticultural soap spray, which coats and suffocates the insects. You could also use horticultural oil or pyrethrum spray. Take care to cover all parts of the leaves, particularly the undersides, and apply in the cool of the day. You may also need to apply a follow-up spray after a few days to take care of any pests you missed.

Whitefly has some naturally occurring enemies, too, including a predatory mite called *Typhlodromips montdorensis* that feeds on eggs and nymphs, and the parasitic wasp *Encarsia formosa*, which lays its eggs in the nymphs. These can be purchased from online suppliers and then introduced into your garden.

TEXT PHIL DUDMAN **PHOTOS** ISTOCK

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JANUARY a month in the GARDEN

More than 50 seasonal jobs to do

words by **JUDY HORTON**

PHOTO GAP PHOTOS/TIM GAINEY

TOP JOB

LOVE YOUR liliums

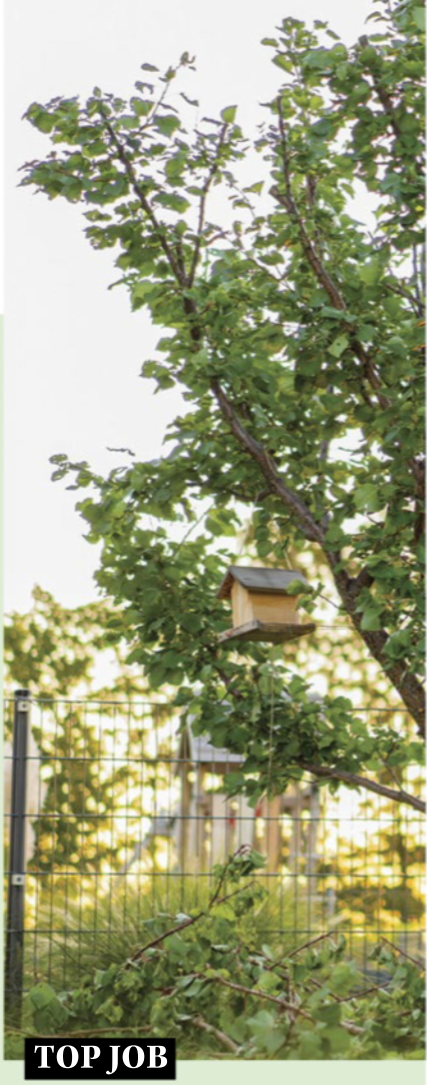
Summer is lilium season, when these graceful and stately plants (*left*) put on their annual show. Liliums are most commonly grown from bulbs that are planted in autumn and early winter. New plants can also be started from the small bulbils that develop on the stems after flowering. And at this time of year, you might even succumb to the charms of a potted lilium in full bloom and buy it on impulse. ►

It's time to...

- **Pack** lunch and a rug, and take the kids – or grandkids – out into the garden for a summer picnic (*above*)
- **Continue** deadheading flowering plants, unless you want to leave them to develop seeds for sowing later
- **Set up** temporary shade protection over newly planted annuals and soft-leafed perennials
- **Use** a long-bladed knife or a specifically designed weed-pulling tool to remove flatweeds such as plantains and dandelions from the lawn
- **Liquid-fertilise** hippeastrum and amaryllis plants after flowers fade to strengthen the bulbs for next season's blooming
- **Check** watering systems each time you run them to make sure there are no blockages or leaks
- **Give** dried-out pot plants a good soak in a bucket of water
- **Be alert** to any spider, wasp and snake activity, and wear appropriate gloves and footwear
- **Rejuvenate** leggy petunias by cutting them back and feeding fortnightly with liquid fertiliser
- **Move** potted cacti under cover to make sure they are out of the rain during wet periods

Liliums can last for years in the garden. Because they prefer cool soil, they should be planted in a spot that is protected from hot afternoon sun and kept well mulched. As with all true bulbs, lilium leaves should be allowed to die down naturally after flowering. After the foliage has browned, you can divide well-established bulb clumps and plant them in other parts of the garden.

As any florist will tell you, liliums are much-loved cut flowers. Watch out for the pollen, though, because it can stain. Some recommend removing the pollen-bearing stamens before arranging the blooms. (Note that liliums are extremely toxic to cats.)



TOP JOB

PRUNE Summer trees

top tip

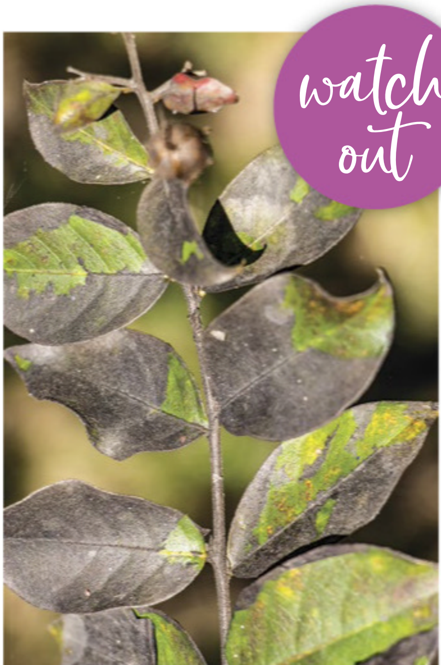
HARVEST OFTEN

Summer vegies grow quickly, so it's important to visit the patch regularly – daily if possible – to harvest produce while it's young and tender. Overlooked zucchini, for example, can grow from a green finger to a giant, tasteless, starchy marrow within a couple of days. And continual harvesting keeps vegies like beans producing more, because if pods are left on the plant to develop mature seeds, the plant thinks it's done its job. The result: no more beans. Picking tomatoes and bringing them indoors when the base has just started to colour reduces the chance of pest attack. Early morning, while it's still cool and moist, is the best time of day to gather vegies during summer.

Once they've finished cropping, summer-bearing fruit trees such as peaches, plums, cherries and apricots (*above*) can be pruned. Because they're in active growth at this time, they're able to recover more quickly than if pruned in winter. Start by removing any dead or diseased branches and cutting out thin shoots that are cluttering up the centre of the plant. This allows more air and sunlight into the tree. Remove suckers that are sprouting from below the graft. Prune back long, lanky shoots, making the cut just above an outward-facing healthy bud.

SOOTY MOULD

Sooty mould is a black powdery coating that grows on the sticky honeydew produced by sap-sucking insects such as aphids and scales. Once you find and control this base cause (try using horticultural oils), the mould will gradually flake away. If the mould-covered foliage is really ugly, you can speed up its departure by hosing it off or scrubbing the leaves gently with a soft brush dipped in soapy (not detergent) water.



watch out

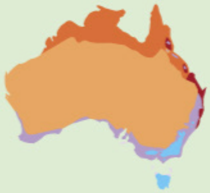
PHOTOS ISTOCK

LOOKING FOR THE VEGIE SOW & PLANT CHART? Turn to page 65

SOW & PLANT NOW

alyssum	●	●	●	●	●
amaranthus	●	●		●	
bedding begonia		●		●	●
brachyscome		●	●	●	●
californian poppy			●	●	●
celosia	●	●		●	●
coleus	●	●		●	●
cosmos			●	●	●
dianthus		●	●	●	
english daisy			●	●	●
everlasting daisy			●	●	●
gerbera		●		●	●
globe amaranth		●		●	●
gypsophila			●	●	●
hollyhock			●	●	●
impatiens	●	●		●	●
kangaroo paw			●	●	●
marigold	●	●	●	●	●
nasturtium		●		●	●
petunia		●		●	●
phlox		●		●	●
portulaca			●	●	●
salvia	●	●	●	●	●
snapdragon				●	●
stock			●	●	●
sunflower	●	●	●	●	●
torenia	●	●		●	●
verbena				●	●
zinnia	●	●	●	●	●

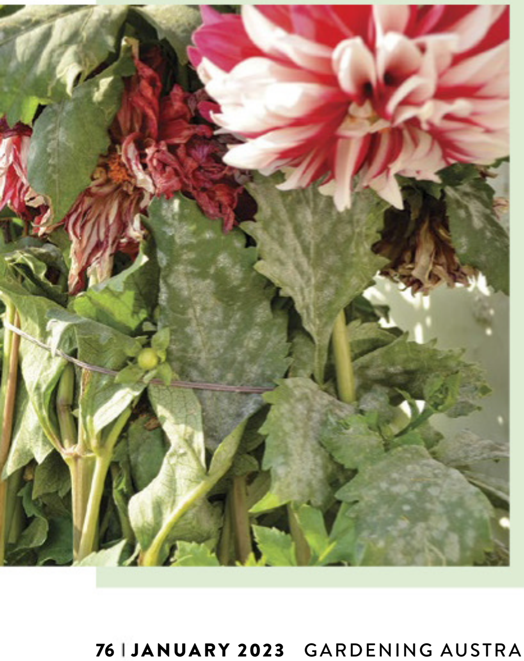
KEY



tropical	●
subtropical	●
arid/semi-arid	●
warm temperate	●
cold temperate	●

Do it now

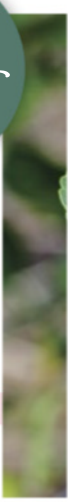
- **Re-adjust** your potted Christmas tree to outdoor life by putting it out into a shaded spot, then gradually moving it into more sun
- **Give** the lawn a pick-me-up by applying a liquid fertiliser mixed with seaweed solution
- **Plant** autumn crocus and nerine bulbs so they'll be in flower well before winter arrives
- **Take** cuttings from azaleas, camellias, evergreen magnolias, gardenias and lillypillies, pot into seed-raising mix and keep in light shade while the new roots develop
- **Choose** a cool, overcast day to make any new plantings, and keep them regularly watered through the hot months
- **Prune** long, whippy shoots from wisteria, cutting back to just above a short, fat bud
- **Keep** bird baths clean, free of leaves and topped up with water
- **Avoid** using dry, salty fertilisers during warm weather because they can easily damage root systems
- **Remove** the two smaller side flowers on tuberous begonias so the plant can put more energy into the showy central bloom
- **Pick** and bag mildewed dahlia leaves (*below*) to help prevent the spread of disease



pest alert

CITRUS LEAFMINER

This annoying imported summer pest attacks the new leaves on citrus trees in almost all parts of the country. The small mother moth lays eggs on the fresh warm-season growth and the tiny larvae burrow or 'mine' through the foliage, leaving behind sinuous trails and twisted leaves (*right*). Avoid heavy fertilising and watering in summer to reduce the amount of new flush growth. Prune off the most heavily damaged foliage. Oil spray can help deter the pest, but should be directed at the topmost growth in order to avoid damaging natural predators. Another control method is to hang leafminer traps in the trees, following directions for use. These traps attract the male leafminer, thereby reducing the overall population.



WARM WEATHER CARE *for* POT PLANTS

Potted plants need extra care to help them survive the hot weather. Keep a special watch on pots that are in full sun, and move any showing signs of stress into the shade. Be aware that black or dark-coloured pots will always absorb more heat and, as a result, plants can be vulnerable to root damage. All container plants will need to be watered more frequently during the summer months, and moisture lovers like hydrangeas will appreciate sitting in water-filled saucers – but only at this time of year. Avoid fertilising during heatwaves. Even after the heat has diminished, only feed with liquid fertilisers or slow-release organic pellets.

PHOTOS ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

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Edibles

- **Visit** blueberry bushes every day and continually harvest any ripe fruit (*above*)
- **Use** a strong jet of water to blast off woolly aphids clustering on the branches and stems of apple trees
- **Pick up** and bin fallen tomatoes to prevent the spread of fruit fly and fungal diseases
- **Feed** avocado trees with an organic-based fruit fertiliser, then water well and renew a layer of light mulch over the root area
- **Use** a hoe to hill up soil around the base of growing tomato and potato plants
- **Pinch back** the main leading shoots of pumpkin plants to encourage more female flower-bearing side shoots
- **Sow** a second crop of climbing beans, tomatoes and sweetcorn, but only in areas that don't experience autumn frosts
- **Pick** leafy greens early in the morning when they're at their freshest
- **Remove** young fruit from newly planted citrus trees, thereby giving the plant more time to develop a good structure, and thin out heavy crops on established trees
- **Resist** the temptation to pick any more rhubarb stalks and leave the clump to thicken up through the rest of summer

prune roses

Winter isn't the only time to prune roses. Midsummer is a great time to give repeat-blooming roses an overall trim to encourage vigorous new growth for a fine autumn display. Cut the stems back to an outward-facing bud, keeping a few leaves on each stem. Bin any diseased leaves, making sure you also pick up those that have fallen to the ground. For spring-only blooming roses, remove the oldest canes at the base, but try not to cut back any of this season's growth, as it will produce next spring's blooms. Fertilise all roses after pruning, water well and spread a fresh layer of mulch over the root area.

TOP JOB

plan for SHADE

Take a walk around the garden on a hot day and see where you could use a bit more shade. Decide if you have room for a tree or if you'd be better off erecting a pergola that will eventually be covered by a climber. Deciduous trees and vines can be useful because they allow the sun through in winter when it's most needed. Check with local suppliers for the plants that are best suited to your climate. Small deciduous trees such as crabapple or frangipani do well in relatively confined spaces. Ornamental grapes and wisteria (*left*) will cover a pergola and create summer shade and allow winter sun into an outdoor sitting area.

top tip

SHAKE UP SWEETCORN

Once your corn plants have developed their topmost pollen-bearing tassels (*above*) and are starting to form small cobs further down the stalks, they'll appreciate some help with pollination. Do this by giving the plants a gentle shake to loosen the pollen and encourage it to fall down onto the silks at the end of the cobs. You'll ensure the formation of plump, kernel-filled ears of corn. Another trick is to snip off some tassel stems, then shake them like a feather duster over the incipient cobs, allowing maximum pollen to fall onto the silks.

PHOTOS ISTOCK, LUKE SIMON

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In the tropics

- **Spread** a layer of mulch over newly applied fertiliser (*above*) to prevent the nutrients washing away with heavy summer rains
- **Pick** sweet potato and choko vine tips and add to stir-fries and quiches
- **Make sure** lawns, pots and garden plants don't dry out if monsoon rains are later than usual
- **Prune** banana clumps, cutting off the excess at ground level, leaving just one main stem and two side shoots
- **Inspect** the undersides of leaves in the herb and vegie patch for stuck-on whitefly eggs, then prune off and bin any infested foliage
- **Make** a teepee support for winged beans and snake beans before sowing
- **Spend** wet days in the shed and do maintenance, such as sorting, cleaning and sharpening garden tools
- **Sow** seeds of Kent pumpkin (*below*) into a compost-rich mound in a sunny spot with plenty of space for the pumpkin vine to spread (it does well in the tropics)
- **Sit** a yellow plastic container filled with a 1:10 molasses-water mix beneath affected plants to trap grasshoppers
- **Empty** water out of the centre of bromeliads before re-filling – this gets rid of any mosquito larvae from the cup

Record your plantings

It's so easy to forget where and when you bought a new plant, so why not make a resolution to maintain an ongoing planting record for every long-term shrub, tree or perennial you add to the garden. One easy way to start is by sticking each plant's label into a book and writing beside it the date, place of purchase and its eventual planting position in the garden. You can even note successes or problems, such as the date of a plant's first flowering or its sad demise. If you're tech-savvy, you might prefer to keep a digital record by photographing the label information, adding it to a computer document and inserting any other relevant information. Whichever method you choose, you're guaranteed to thank yourself when you're making future garden plans.

My week
PRIORITIES
DON'T FORGET
NOTES

Daylilies

looking good

You can add easy colour to your summer garden by planting daylilies (*right*). While it's true that individual daylily flowers only last one day, as they fade, they're quickly replaced by new blooms. There's also plenty going on in the daylily world, with new varieties being introduced all the time. Modern breeders are continually adding to the range of flower colours and plant sizes.

Daylily care is simple. Remove dead flower spikes to keep the clumps tidy, watch out for snails and slugs, and fertilise with organic pellets in spring and late summer. Give them some extra water in dry periods.

Daylilies have many uses in the garden. They like at least half a day of sun and can be planted as a border, dotted though garden beds or used to fill containers. Plus, the (unsprayed) buds are edible and can be tossed into stir-fries or vegie medleys. (Note that daylilies are extremely toxic to cats.)

WATCH *for* PESTS

Summer is the height of pest season. All sorts of creatures, especially insects, are breeding like mad. The best way to keep on top of pest incursions is to regularly monitor plants and deal with any problems before they are unmanageable. Aphids, for example, can be easily removed by hand in their early stages. Caterpillars can be plucked off with gloved fingers if they're causing major damage. Remember, though, that many caterpillars turn into the beautiful butterflies we love to have in our gardens. Grow a diverse range of plants and avoid creating a monoculture of one type of plant. Mass plantings will be seen as an invitation to pests to breed and multiply on these hosts. Finally, provide water and shelter for birds, and the pests will be dealt with by your avian allies.

PHOTOS BRITT SPRING PHOTOGRAPHY, ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

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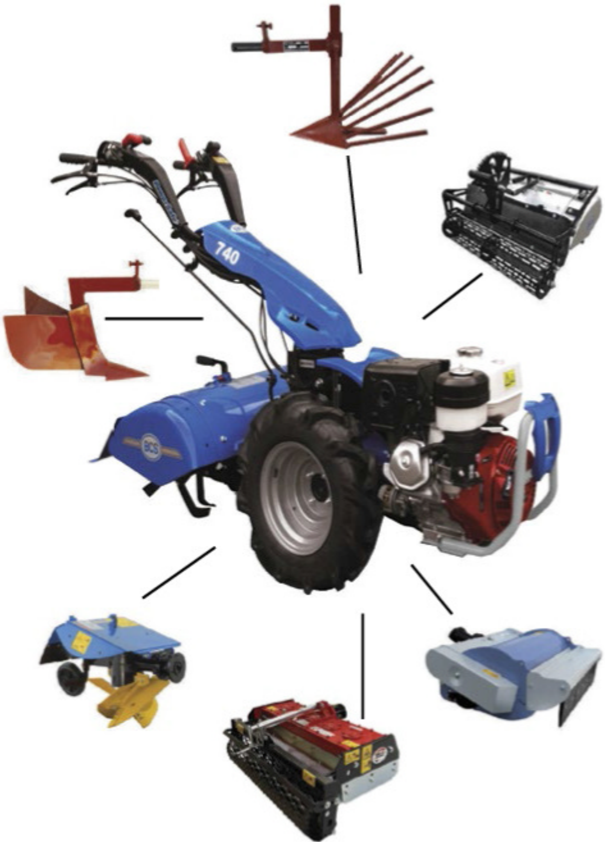

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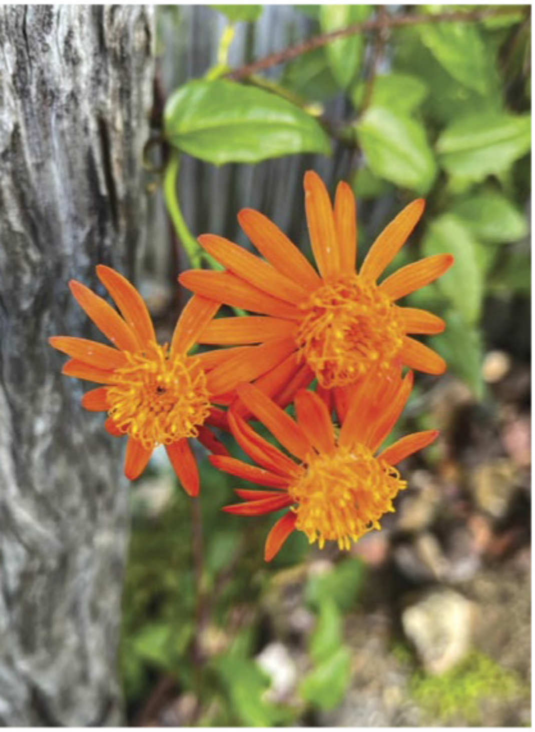


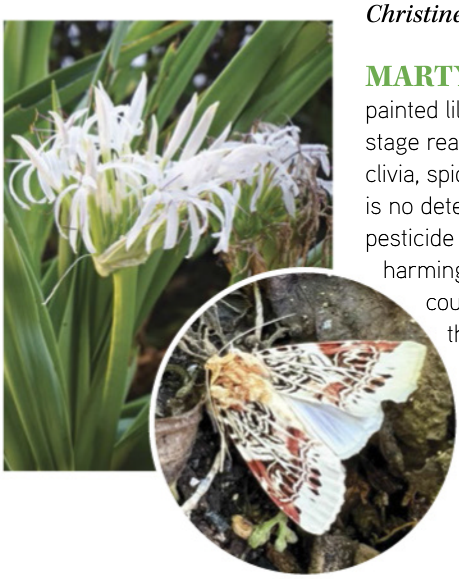
Q **This creeper, bought from a private seller in Cairns, has grown quickly, and its cuttings produce roots when placed in water. Could you please tell me its name and whether it's okay to share its cuttings with friends?**
Karen Woods, Cairns, Qld

AB BISHOP SAYS This is Mexican flamevine (*Pseudogynoxys chenopodioides*). I really appreciate that you're asking advice about whether you should share cuttings with friends. You've obviously cottoned on to the fact that it's a quick grower and potentially weedy, and you're spot on! It's a declared pest and prohibited plant in Western Australia. It has huge potential for spreading into bushland and causing environmental problems in subtropical and tropical climates. It smothers other plants and spreads via its seed, which is dispersed by the wind, and vegetatively by stem cuttings. This plant is extremely hard to control. Also, coming into contact with it can cause dermatitis and itchiness. I would get rid of it and advise the grower who you bought it from, in case they're unaware of its weed potential.

EXOTIC DRAGON FRUIT

Dragon fruit flowers are exquisite, and the juicy fruit is delicious and cooling in the summer months. It's best to plant it next to a trellis.
Lesley Myer, Mansfield, Qld

Q **This moth looks lovely but it's too fond of our swamp lily and necklace beans. How can I stop it from eating the lilies?**
Christine Dudgeon, Yeronga, Qld



MARTYN ROBINSON SAYS This is a painted lily moth (*Spodoptera picta*). Its caterpillar stage readily eats most lilies, including swamp lily, clivia, spider lily and amaryllis. Unfortunately, there is no deterrent I know of, but a bacteria-based pesticide such as Dipel will kill the larvae without harming most other fauna. Alternatively, you could toss the grubs to birds or lizards in the vicinity to encourage them to eat more. I just tolerate rather messy lilies for a little while until the pretty moths appear. The plants always seem to bounce back quickly.

THE ART OF ARTICHOKES

I come from a long line of professional market gardeners and was doing it as a hobby until the last year of my dad's life, when I got more serious. He taught me all I know, except how to grow artichokes – I learnt that on my own. They have taught me patience, and I cook them using old family recipes. This photo of my first artichoke, taken by my daughter, will be displayed as art in my new kitchen. *Michelle Zuvela, Kameruka, NSW*

write and win!

Share your thoughts, ask a question, and show us your best shots. The pick of the crop each month wins a six-month subscription to ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine (current subscriptions will be extended). Note that we can only respond to letters selected for the page.

yoursay@gardeningaustralia.com.au (letters)
experts@gardeningaustralia.com.au (questions)

Your Say, Gardening Australia, nextmedia,
Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590

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Michelle Zuvela from Kameruka in NSW has won a six-month subscription to ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine for telling us about how she learnt to grow artichokes and showing us her first one (*above*).

ABC Gardening AUSTRALIA
Nature's gifts from the garden

PHOTO ISTOCK

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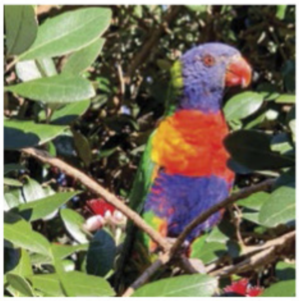
Your Insta posts

Clockwise from top left: **garden.licious** loves seeing flocks of rainbow lorikeets gathering in the garden to feast on the nectar of fruit tree flowers at dawn and dusk during spring, and would like to plant more natives for them. Meanwhile, **charlies.patch** is harvesting handfuls of tasty broad beans and says he loves how they pump nitrogen back into the soil. **mia.elizabeth90** has captured a beautiful moment with this photo of a bee feeding on a red bottlebrush in her garden, and **agardenundergumtrees** had fun making this mosaic sculpture using a hypertufa base and ball, and decorating it with colourful pieces of broken china and tiles.



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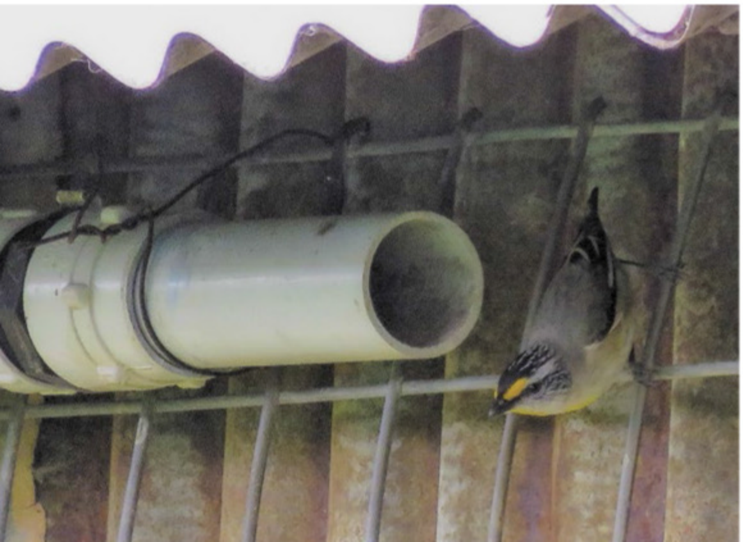
COMPETITION OPEN TO AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTS ONLY. STARTS 12/12/22 AT 00:01 (AEDT) AND CLOSES 15/01/23 AT 23:59 (AEDT). FIVE WINNERS WILL EACH RECEIVE AN ABC *GARDENING AUSTRALIA* PRIZE PACK, VALUED AT $66.80. TOTAL PRIZE POOL VALUE IS $334. ENTRIES JUDGED ON 17/01/23 AT 14:00 (AEDT) AT NEXTMEDIA, LEVEL 8, 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065. THE JUDGES' DECISION IS FINAL AND NO CORRESPONDENCE WILL BE ENTERED INTO. PRIZE SENT TO THE ADDRESS PROVIDED ON THE ENTRY. FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT GARDENINGAUSTRALIA.COM.AU. PRIVACY POLICY AVAILABLE AT NEXTMEDIA.COM.AU. PROMOTER IS NEXTMEDIA PTY LTD; ABN 84 128 805 970; 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065.



IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME

I suggested to my husband that we make something for the little pardalote birds to nest in, as I had seen and heard them in the garden. I know they particularly like holes in the ground, or something with a tunnel-like entrance, but there was nowhere safe around the place. He made this container from plumbing bits and pieces, and we put it under the eaves of my potting shed. It's close to a nesting material caddy that we put up last year after seeing the idea in your magazine. Well, as they say, if you build it, they will come; within a week, I saw them in there.
Monica Rowland, Eaglehawk, Vic

TV

We'll be back at the beginning of February 2023 – bigger and better than ever! Can't wait to see you all then!

December 16

It's our last episode for 2022! **Clarence Slockee** puts his spin on a classic Christmas song, highlighting the traditional Indigenous seasonal indicators and the plants that flower at this time of year – and you can sing along! **Josh Byrne** shares his tips to keep your garden ticking along through the holidays, **Sophie Thomson** shows how to light up your life with flower lanterns, **Hannah Moloney** visits a market garden that produces heirloom vegetables, **Jane Edmanson** visits the garden of a plant educator couple, **Millie Ross** learns how to turn fruit into a holiday treat, and we meet a glass artist who creates replicas of vegies.

While *Gardening Australia* TV is on holiday, you can keep in touch with us via our website and social media channels.

- Missed an episode or two of *Gardening Australia*? You can catch up on ABC iview at any time **iview.abc.net.au**
- Head to our website to watch individual stories and read our fact sheets, where we list every plant that appears in each episode **abc.net.au/gardening**
- We also have our own YouTube channel: **youtube.com/GardeningAustralia**
- And if you don't already receive our free weekly newsletter, head to our website to find out how you can sign up **abc.net.au/gardening/newsletter**

PHOTO VIRGINIA CUMMINS **THIS INFORMATION IS CORRECT AT THE TIME OF PRINTING BUT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

radio

Tune into your local ABC radio for gardening advice from the experts. See times below. For more details about coverage in your area, phone 139 994 or visit reception.abc.net.au.

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ABC Radio Sydney
Saturday 9am
ABC Radio Central Coast
Saturday 9am
ABC Central West
Saturday 8.30am
ABC Illawarra
Saturday 8.30am
ABC Mid North Coast; ABC Coffs Coast
Saturday 9.30am, Thursday 9.30am
ABC Newcastle
Saturday 8.30am
ABC New England North West
Saturday 8.30am, Thursday 9.30am
ABC North Coast
Saturday 8.30am
ABC Riverina
Saturday 8.30am, Tuesday 9.35am
ABC South East
Wednesday 10am, Saturday 9am
ABC Western Plains
Thursday 9.35am fortnightly, Saturday 8.30am

NT

ABC Darwin & ABC Katherine
Saturday 9am
ABC Alice Springs; ABC Tennant Creek
Saturday 8.30am

QLD

ABC Radio Brisbane
Saturday 6am
ABC Gold Coast
Saturday 9am
ABC Sunshine Coast
Thursday 10.30am, Saturday 8.30am
ABC Southern Queensland
Saturday 9am
ABC North Queensland
Friday 10am
ABC Tropical North; ABC Capricornia; ABC Wide Bay; ABC North West Qld; ABC Western Qld
Friday 10am
ABC Far North
Friday 10am, Saturday 7.30am

ACT

ABC Radio Canberra
Saturday 8.30am

SA

ABC Radio Adelaide; ABC North & West; ABC Eyre Peninsula; ABC South East SA
Saturday 8.30am
ABC Riverland
Saturday 7am
ABC Broken Hill
Saturday 9am
Statewide; ABC Radio Adelaide; ABC North & West; ABC Eyre Peninsula; ABC South East; ABC Riverland; ABC Broken Hill
Sunday 11am

TAS

ABC Radio Hobart; ABC Northern Tasmania
Saturday 9am

VIC

ABC Radio Melbourne
Saturday 9.15am
ABC Victoria
Monday 9.40am
ABC Southwest Victoria
Thursday 7.20am fortnightly

WA

ABC Radio Perth; ABC Great Southern; ABC South West; ABC Goldfields Esperance; ABC Kimberley; ABC Pilbara; ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt
Tuesday 2.15pm, Saturday 9.05am

listen

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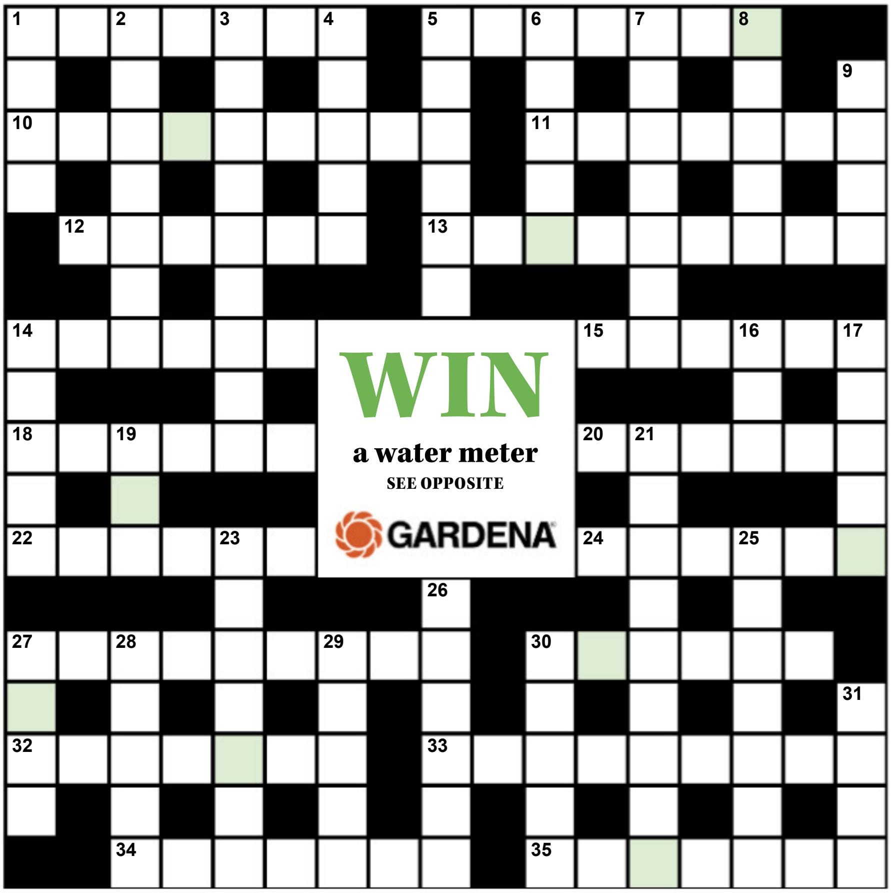
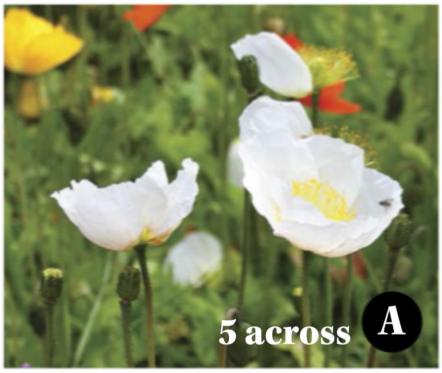
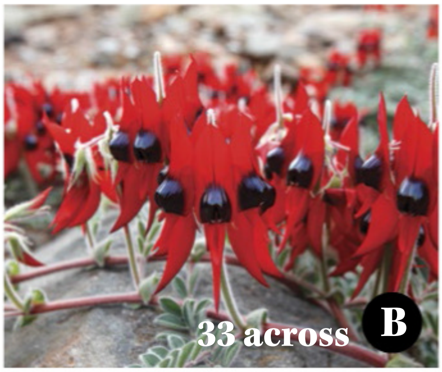
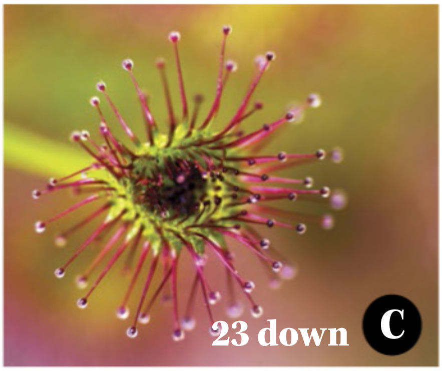
take a break!

Put the kettle on – it's time to relax! Solve our puzzle to be in the running to win a Gardena AquaCount Water Meter









156 SOLUTION NEXT MONTH

across

1. Genus of the waratahs (7)
5. These flowers (7) **(Picture A)**
10. Dame Edna Everage's favourite flower (9)
11. Relating to the womb (7)
12. New branches (6)
13. Boneless cut of lean steak (3,6)
14. Relating to country life (6)
15. Official population count (6)
18. Triangular bone at the base of the spine (6)
20. Tasmania, the ... state (6)
22. Least refined (6)
24. Crowded mass blocking a river (6)
27. The south-eastern Australian tree *Eucalyptus delegatensis* (6,3)
30. Weeding (6)
32. The tropical plant *Phytolacca octandra*, now a weed in Australia (7)
33. *Swainsona formosa* or Sturt's ... (6,3) **(Picture B)**
34. Made certain, guaranteed (7)
35. Common over-the-counter painkiller (7)

down

1. Clothing for a specified use (*colloq.*) (4)
2. Drains away from soil or similar (7)
3. The irritating plant *Toxicodendron radicans* (6,3)
4. Book of maps (5)
5. Delicate shade of a colour (6)
6. Trim, cut back (5)
7. Genus of bloodleaf (7)
8. Motionless (5)
9. Garden snail, for one (4)
14. Happen again, be repeated (5)
16 & 19. Another name for manatee (3,3)
17. Genus of 21 down (5)
19. See 16 down
21. Popular group of succulents (9)
23. These carnivorous plants (7) **(Picture C)**
25. Evergreen with dark purple berry-like cones (7)
26. Protected from the sun (6)
27 & 31. Precipitation that causes environmental harm (4,4)
28. High-quality black tea, orange ... (5)
29. A tree of the genus *Alnus* (5)
30. Another name for plantain lily (5)
31. See 27 down

CROSSWORD COMPILED BY STEVE BALL PHOTOS ISTOCK

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how to enter

We have 15 Gardena AquaCount Water Meters, each valued at $39.99, to give away. To enter, unscramble the highlighted letters in the crossword (*opposite*), and email your answer to comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au by January 8. Put 'AquaCount Water Meter' in the subject line, and include your name, street address, email and daytime phone number.

WINNERS

Shields Weed Burner (October 22) C Chitty, Greenfields, WA; M Daly, Kallangur, Qld; H Dobson, Broadford, Vic; S Fitch, Kialla, Vic; D Lackerstein, Cook, ACT; S Rybicki, Nuriootpa, SA; D Setter, Wilton, NSW. **Fiskars Xact Weed Puller (October 22)** D Atkins, Bayswater North, Vic; J Chaves, Sunnybank, Qld; K Hedger, Fairview Park, SA; M Hobbins, Wendoree Park, NSW; R Jones, Williamstown, Vic; L Kennedy, Mullumbimby, NSW.

solution

December 2022 crossword

C	O	R	O	L	L	A	■	H	E	A	D	■	T	A	L	C
L	■	E	■	E	■	R	■	A	■	U	■	■	■	L	■	O
U	N	A	R	M	■	A	D	U	L	T	■	I	D	E	A	L
S	■	R	■	O	■	B	■	L	■	H	I	T	■	M	■	U
T	H	E	■	N	E	L	U	M	B	O	■	A	L	B	U	M
E	■	N	■	S	■	E	■	■	■	R	■	L	■	I	■	B
R	E	D	U	C	E						K	I	M	C	H	I
■	■	E	■	E	■						■	A	■	■	■	N
R	O	D	E	N	T						E	N	D	I	V	E
O	■	■	■	T	■						■	D	■	R	■	■
O	Y	S	T	E	R						A	R	N	I	C	A
T	■	E	■	D	■	A	■	■	■	M	■	E	■	S	■	B
S	C	R	A	G	■	B	A	O	B	A	B	S	■	H	A	Y
T	■	C	■	U	R	L	■	N	■	K	■	S	■	M	■	S
O	P	I	U	M	■	O	L	I	V	E	■	I	R	O	N	S
C	■	A	■	■	■	O	■	O	■	U	■	N	■	S	■	E
K	A	L	E	■	O	M	E	N	■	P	E	G	A	S	U	S

155

December's unscrambled word: vegetable

CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS: OPEN TO AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTS ONLY. COMPETITION OPENS 12/12/22 AT 00:01 (AEDT) AND CLOSES 08/01/23 AT 23:59 (AEDT). 15 LUCKY WINNERS WILL RECEIVE A GARDENA AQUACOUNT WATER METER, VALUED AT $39.99. TOTAL PRIZE POOL VALUE IS $599.85. WINNER DRAWN ON 10/01/23 AT 14:00 (AEDT) AT NEXTMEDIA, 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065. WINNERS NOTIFIED BY TELEPHONE AND IN WRITING. PERMIT NUMBERS: NSW TP/01427, ACT TP 21/02081. FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT GARDENINGAUSTRALIA.COM.AU. PRIVACY POLICY AVAILABLE AT NEXTMEDIA.COM.AU. PROMOTER IS NEXTMEDIA PTY LTD; ABN 84 128 805 970; 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065.

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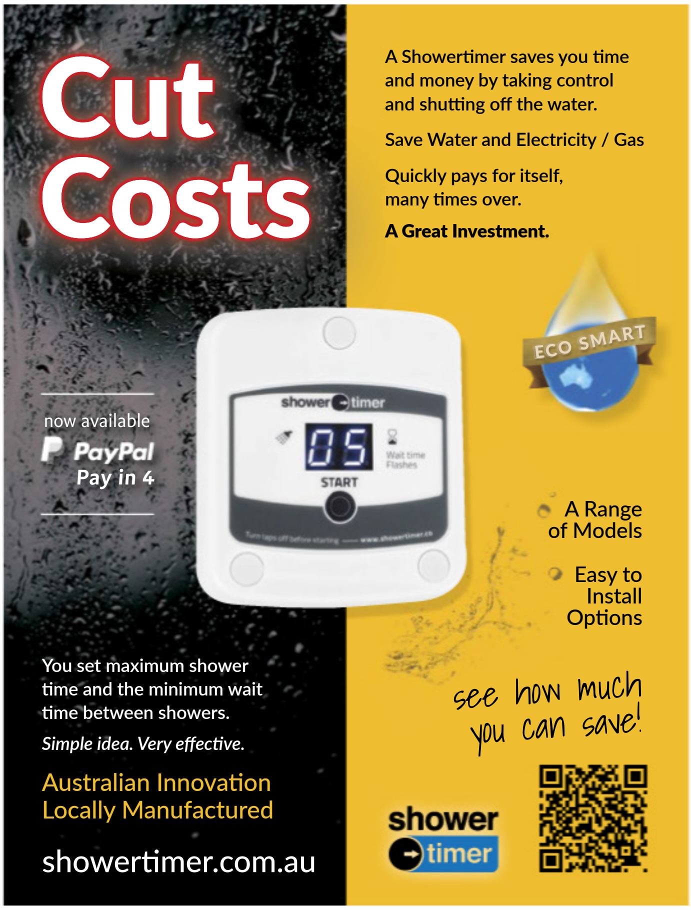

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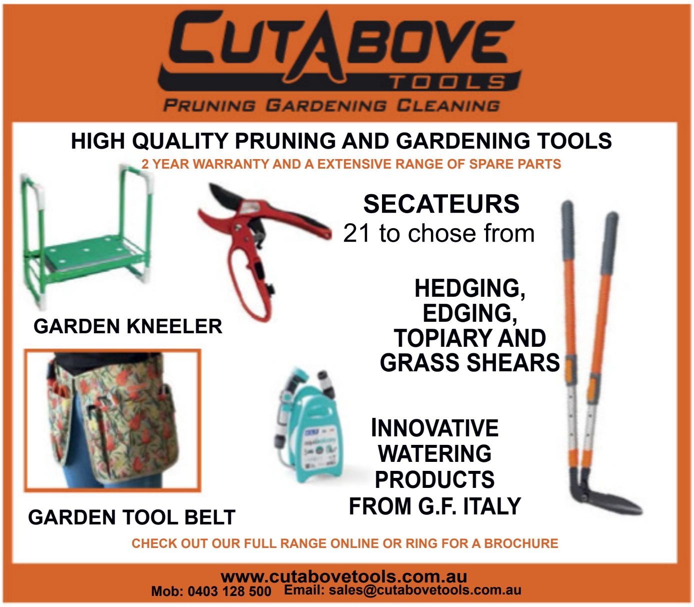

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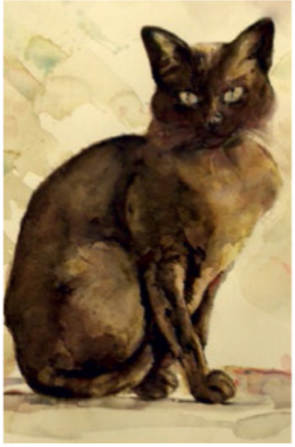

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the big picture

Buying and collecting seeds is an act of hope and optimism – but sometimes a seed packet represents a dream that doesn't quite match the reality, writes **MICHAEL McCOY**

I pride myself on being a very rational and bordering-on-annoyingly careful spender of my limited gardening budget. Much to the frustration of many a nurseryperson, I'm not one bit tempted towards the impulse purchasing of plants. All transactions are carefully considered and planned. And any book release is thoroughly examined for its usefulness before it gets to further weigh down my already overloaded bookshelves.

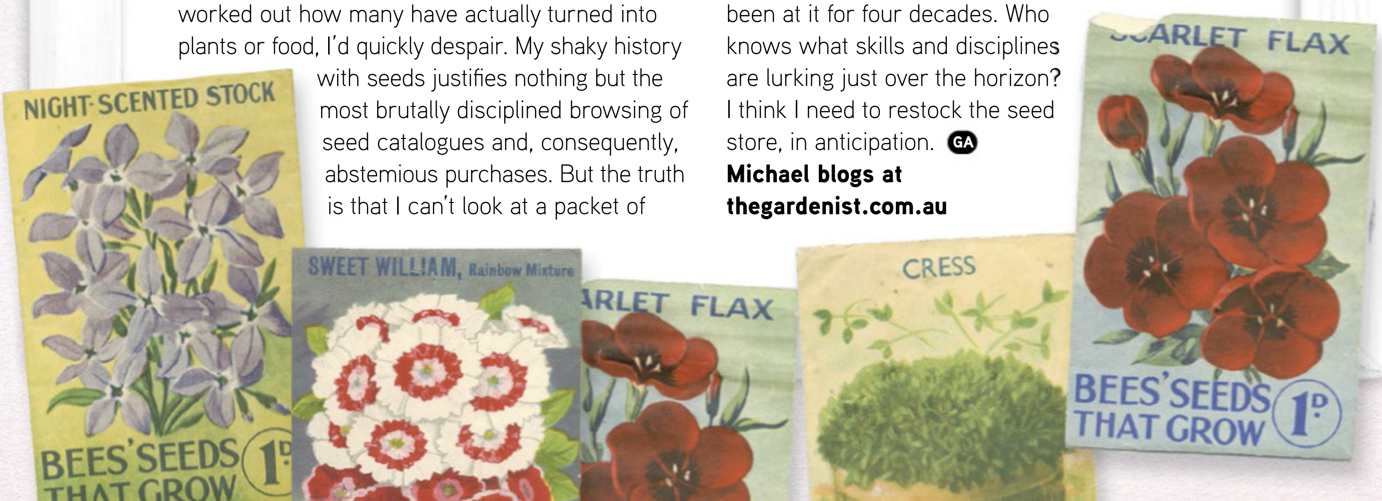
But the other day, I was sorting through my vegetable seeds and found unopened packets way beyond their sow-by date. They were among the much-more-forgivable packets of opened seeds, also past their date. About 25 years ago I bought a charming old timber printer's rack with tiny graduated pigeonholes that once held printer's blocks, and they're perfect for secreting decades of accumulated seed packets, providing this very bad collector's habit with picturesque validity. But unopened packets? From three or four years ago? What was I thinking when I bought them? What kind of ridiculous buzz had me in its thrall?

Seeds may be the highest form of gardening optimism. If I went through those old packets and worked out how many have actually turned into plants or food, I'd quickly despair. My shaky history with seeds justifies nothing but the most brutally disciplined browsing of seed catalogues and, consequently, abstemious purchases. But the truth is that I can't look at a packet of seeds without seeing rigidly straight rows of perfectly spaced vegetables, or a patch of exemplarily staked and deadheaded annuals in heavy bloom, or strong young bulb plants in precocious flower as a consequence of my (imaginary) remarkable husbandry.

When standing before a display of seeds, I lose any grip on how much space I have for growing food, or how little of my garden I give over to annuals, and how little water I have to give them. Standing there, gazing at this rack of floral and edible possibilities, nothing stands in the way of my perfect plan for a succession of vegetables, so that young lettuces grow in the spaces between my juvenile broccoli plants, with the former being harvested just as the foliage of the latter starts to close in over them. And tomatoes can be sown indoors, ahead of the climatic curve, so they're fully ready for the handover from the broccoli. And if, perchance, I'm out by a few weeks in my timing, I don't see why I couldn't slip a cheeky little sowing of radishes between the two main crops.

So far, the reality falls comically – perhaps tragically – short of the dreams. But I've only been at it for four decades. Who knows what skills and disciplines are lurking just over the horizon? I think I need to restock the seed store, in anticipation. GA

Michael blogs at thegardenist.com.au



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